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LETTERS

ON THE

Sacred Predictions :

PROPER FOR THE

Consideration of all Sorts of People at all Times ; more especially, whenever in Danger of PUBLIC CALAMITIES : Collected out of the Holy Scriptures ; shewing the EVENTS, which some Persons have Reason to fear ; and those for which others have Ground to hope.

Whereunto is added, a LETTER, containing an Answer to the QUESTION, viz. Whether the public Reading the Holy Scriptures, on the Lord's Days is an ORDINANCE of divine Appointment ; and a Part of the Worship which God requires from his People ?

All intended for promoting Piety, and the Consolation of serious Christians of every Denomination.

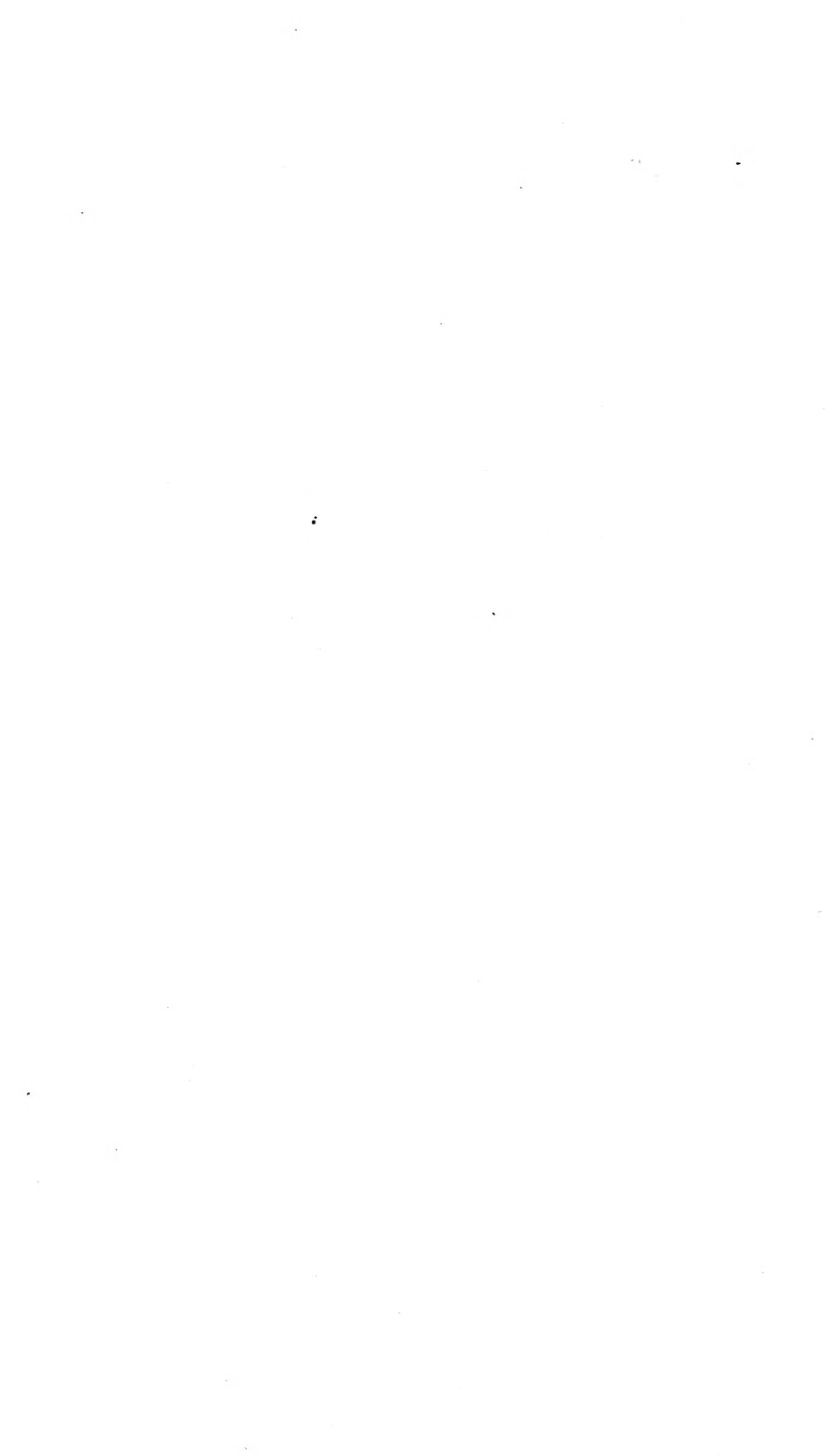
By THEOPHILUS LOBB, M. D.

And C. R. M. L. C. and R. S. L. S.

Search the Scriptures. John v. 39.

L O N D O N :

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PREDICTIONS, are all those Declarations of future EVENTS recorded in the Holy Scriptures, which God by his Providence has brought, or will bring to pass; whether those *Events* be Punishments, or Blessings.

THUS the Declarations of the Destruction of Jerusalein, and of the Miseries which befel the Jews, were Predictions.

THUS the Declarations of the Deliverance of the Children of Israel out of Egypt, and from the seventy Years Captivity, were Predictions; and so indeed, are all the Threatnings God has denounced against the Wicked; and all the Promises of Blessings, which he has made to Nations, or particular Persons, who love and serve him, and keep his Commandments: And thus the *Sacred Declarations* in the two first of these Letters are Predictions.

THE Providence of the righteous and faithful God, is always fulfilling his Word: Therefore David said unto God, *I will praise thee with my whole Heart, — for thy Loving-kindness,*

kindness, and for thy Truth; for thou hast magnified thy WORD, above all thy Name. Psal. cxxxviii. 1, 2. God has done it above every other Way, in which he had made himself known; and he does so still, by bringing to pass the *Events* foretold by the Prophets of the Old Testament, and by the blessed Jesus, and the Apostles, and Prophets of the New.

IT is therefore incumbent on all Christians to take Notice of them, so far as they shall come within their Knowledge; and to observe the Dealings of the supreme Governour of the World, with their own Country, and their Neighbours, and likewise with themselves; whether the Events, which occur be merciful, or afflictive.

THE *Works of the Lord* (both those of Creation, and those of his Providence) are great, sought out of all them, that have Pleasure therein. His Work (of Providence, as well as of Creation) is honourable, and glorious; and his Righteousness endureth for ever. He hath made his wonderful Works to be remembered. Psal. cxi. 2, 3, 4. We ought therefore to observe, and remember them.

A DISREGARD of the Acts of the righteous and gracious God in his Government of the World, and more especially in what relates to our own Country, our own Cities,

ties, and Families, and Persons; is a provoking Disregard of himself.

BECAUSE *they regard not the Works of the Lord, nor the Operation of his Hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.* It is said Pſal. xxviii. 5.

THE two first of theſe Letters were published, 1750. under the Title of *Sacred Declarations, conſidered, &c.* and are now published again, with others ſubſervient to the ſame Deſign.

I HAVE in theſe Letters collected a Summary both of the *Law*, and *Gospel*, and a Summary of the Predictions of Punishment appointed for the Wicked; and of the Predictions of Bleſſings for the Righteous, for all true Believers in this Life, at Death, and afterwards; and on theſe Accounts, it may be uſeful for Chriſtians frequently to look into them.

THE laſt Letter is added on the Account of the Importance of its Contents, and the many Advantages which may be obtained, by diffuſing the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures among the People.

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C O N T E N T S.

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likewise

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I. Of temporal Afflictions particularly, 1. By the Death of Children. 2. The Death of Husbands. 3. The Loss of dear and useful Friends. 4. The falling under false Accusation, with the Predictions which may afford Relief under such Sorrows.

II. OF spiritual Troubles, and suitable Predictions; particularly, 1. Of an habitual Despondence. 2. Of the Anguish and Distress of the Soul, after the Commission of some heinous Sin. 3. Of the great Troubles, and Sorrows occasioned by the violent Temptations and Assaults of the Devil. p. 64.

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6. *That*

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BOOKS



BOOKS published by Dr. LOBB.

1. **A DISCOURSE** of the divine Institution of the *Ministry* of the Gospel, with Answers to the Arguments (in a Book intituled, *The Rights of the Christian Church, &c.*) against it.

2. **A DISCOURSE**, wherein the Being of GOD; the divine Authority of the Holy *Scriptures*, and the Doctrine of the Sacred TRINITY, are briefly proved.

3. **A BRIEF DEFENCE** of the Christian RELIGION for the Conviction of *Deists*; and the Establishment of Christians in the Belief of the Gospel.

4. **A DIALOGUE** between a *Master* and his Servants, concerning the Sin of *Lying*, explaining the Nature, and shewing the Heinousness of it, and of other Sins, for the concealing of which, *Lying* is often used; and proposing a sure Way to become free from the strong Inclinations to it. A fit Present from Masters, and Mistresses, to their Servants, and from Parents to their Children.

5. **AN ANSWER** to the QUESTION, *viz.* Whether it is lawful for the Professors of the Christian Religion to go to Plays? With some Soliloquies, proper in Relation to them.

6. **LETTERS** relating to the *Plague*, and other infectious *Fevers*, in two Parts, *viz.*

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Part II. Containing **LETTERS**, (not read to the Royal Society) shewing who may fly from a City, when the divine Providence brings the Pestilence, or other infectious Fevers into it, and who are obliged in Duty to stay in it; and proposing proper Means to preserve *Magistrates*, and the *Ministers of Christ*, and the Assemblies of People when met together, either for the Administration of Justice, or the Celebration of divine Worship: Like-

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wife proposing suitable Methods of Management in Families *before*, and *when*, and *after* the Distemper has been in them :

And likewise, as to the Conduct of *Physicians, Surgeons, Apothecaries, Nurses*, and others obliged to attend or visit the Sick : INTERMIXED with Advices to serious Christians ; and also shewing the Influence which such an awful Visitation should have on the Minds of those who have been negligent of Religion, and have lived in known and wilful Disobedience to the holy Commandments of God. To which is added a LETTER concerning the *Mortality* among the Cattle.

7. A LETTER, intitled *Sacred Declarations, considered, &c.* Containing an Account of Things which may render People apprehensive that publick Calamities are approaching ; with a Summary of the divine Laws comprehended in the first Four of the ten Commandments ; and of the Predictions of Punishments on those who live in wilful Disobedience to them : Likewise an Account of a sure Way for Persons under the terrible Threatnings of the holy God to obtain the Pardon of all their Sins, Peace, Safety, Comfort, and Happiness.

8. A LETTER, containing both a Summary of the divine Laws comprehended in the Six last of the Ten Commandments ; and of the Predictions of Punishments recorded in the Sacred Scriptures, for the wilful Transgressors of them, with proper Advices.

9. A TREATISE ON the SMALL POX in its various Kinds, shewing what ought to be done in the Management of the Sick, in Regard to the several Periods of the Distemper, and the dangerous Symptoms incident to it, as to Diet and Medicines: Illustrated with *fifty* HISTORIES in which the Symptoms are exemplified, even the most Threatning ; with an Account of the Management, and Remedies which were effectual to the Recovery of the Sick from this terrible Disease: Recommended to the Publick by the late learned Dr. BOERHAAVE, which Recommendation, with his express Consent, is Printed, and prefixed to the Book.

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10. RATIONAL METHODS of curing *Fevers*, deduced from the Structure, and Oeconomy of human Bodies, and the different States of the Solids, and Fluids, under the different Clafies of them.

11. MEDICAL Practice in curing *Fevers*, correspondent to rational Methods, &c. Considered and Exemplified in many *Cases* of the most usual *Fevers*, with an Account of the Medicines by which they were removed.

12. A TREATISE of *Dissolvents* of the *Stone*, and on curing the *Stone*, and *Gout* by Aliment, shewing, by Reason supported with Experiments and *Cases*, the Probability of dissolving the *Stone*, and preventing the Returns of the *Gout* by suitable Diet, with particular Directions of Diet, not only in regard to those Disorders, but likewise for the Benefit of Persons afflicted with *Fevers*, and various other Diseases.

13. A TREATISE on *painful Distempers*, the Causes of them, and the proper Remedies; illustrated with Histories of Persons afflicted with the different Kinds of Pains incident to human Bodies, with an Account of the Method and Medicines by which they were cured.

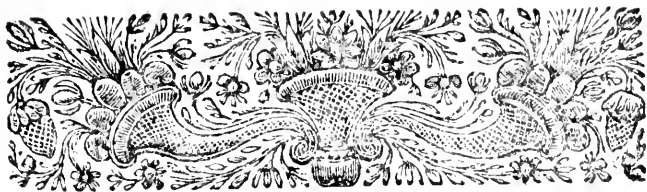
14. A COMPENDIUM of the Practice of *Physick*: Containing the Heads, or Subjects treated on in a Course of Lectures, intended for communicating those Instructions, which may qualify Persons for a judicious and successful Management of People under the various Diseases to which they are liable. Whereunto is added a LETTER, shewing, what is the proper *Preparation* of Persons for *Inoculation*, and for having the SMALL POX favourably in the natural Way.

15. GENERAL Medical *Principles* and *Cautions*, for the Consideration of such as undertake to perform the Office of a Physician to the Sick, in three Parts, founded on FACTS supported by REASON, and confirmed by EXPERIENCE.

16. LETTERS on the *Sacred Predictions*, herewith published.

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A

LETTER

TO THE

INHABITANTS of LONDON and
WESTMINSTER, &c.

WHEN the Inhabitants of any City, or Country, have long revolted from God, when Iniquities have long abounded among them, they then have Reason to fear, and to expect a Suffering under the Divine Vengeance.

When they have long enjoyed the Means, and Opportunities of Knowing God, and his Will, and their Duty to him, and yet stubbornly remain regardless of them, and obstinately persist in Disobedience to his Commandments, they then have the strongest Arguments from the Nature of Things, and the Threatenings of the Divine Law, to be very apprehensive that Destruction from the Almighty may befall them.

It is said in *Heb. x. 26—31*. *If we sin wilfully after that we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries [of God.] He that despised Moses's Law died without Mercy under two, or three Witnesses: Of how much sorer Punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under Foot the Son of God, and hath counted the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy Thing, and hath done Despite unto the Spirit of Grace: For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his People. It is a fearful Thing to fall into the Hands of the Living God.*

That the Inhabitants of *L———* and *W———* have long, and most dreadfully provoked the Wrath of the Holy God, and go on still multiplying the Provocations of his destroying Judgments, is undeniably evident from what his *Lordship* the *Bishop of London*, in his most seasonable and serious Letter to the Clergy and People of these Cities, has very justly observed.

The Righteous God has not only manifested amazing Patience and Forbearance towards us, and the rest of the People of *Great Britain*; but he has, through a Course of many Years, and by various Dispensations of his Providence, both merciful and afflicting, been calling us to Repentance, and Reformation, calling us to seek Peace with him: And he has given awful Tokens of his Indignation, on the account of the numberless Sins against him, by which the Land is polluted; Tokens that the Time of his tremendous Visitation for Sin is very near; nay, but rather that is already begun.

I shall only mention Two Particulars out of many, *viz.* 1. The MORTALITY, which, for some Years, has been destroying the larger Cattle; by which

God

God plainly admonishes us, that if we will not be reformed by such Judgments, he will destroy our Persons. 2. The EARTHQUAKES, which have lately happened. 1. The Mortality among the Cattle is one fearful Token. For after God had threatened to inflict divers Calamities on his People, if they would not hearken to him, and would not do all his Commandments, if they shall despise his Statutes, or if their Soul should abhor his Judgments, so that they would not do all his Commandments, but break his Covenant; I say, after God had denounced various Judgments to be inflicted on them for their Sins, one of which was, that he would destroy their Cattle. (Lev. xxvi. 22.) He says, *If ye will not be reformed by me, by these Things, but will walk contrary unto me, then I will also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you seven Times for your Sins. And I will bring a Sword upon you, that shall avenge the Quarrel of my Covenant: And when ye are gathered together within your Cities, I will send the Pestilence among you, and ye shall be delivered into the Hand of the Enemy.* Vid. Lev. xxvi. 23, 24, 25.

The Holy God, by continuing the mortal Sicknes among the Cattle, tells us, that his Wrath is not turned away from us, that we must repent, and amend our Ways, or expect to feel his Vengeance in our Persons; and by the slow Progress of the Mortality among the Cattle, through a Course of several Years, he shews himself a most merciful God, and that he is loth to destroy us. Therefore,

If People will not hearken to the Almighty, but go on in their Trespases, their Guilt will be most heinously aggravated, and the Righteousness of God's destroying Judgments will be most conspicuous, when they shall be executed.

The other Token of God's Displeasure and Controversy with us, are the EARTHQUAKES, which have

have lately happened, not only under these Two great Cities, but in other Parts of this Kingdom.

EARTHQUAKES are the Productions of the Almighty Power of God ; and happen only when and where he commands them to happen : No Astronomer, no Philosopher, can tell when or where the terrible and mighty CONVULSIONS of the Earth shall be : No, no more than they can tell when the Wind will change from East to West, or to any other Point of the Compass, or how long it shall blow from this or that Quarter, or when it shall raise Storms and Tempests : And although natural Causes may be employed in producing such Effects, yet it is God who manages these natural Causes, and who can restrain, or quicken their Agency as he pleases, and who always does so.

It is the Mighty God, who makes the Earth to tremble; therefore said *David (Psalm lx. 12.) O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased ; O turn thyself to us again. Thou hast made the Earth to tremble, thou hast broken it : Heal the Breaches thereof, for it shaketh.*

The Lord is the true God, and an everlasting King : At his Wrath, the Earth shall tremble, and the Nations shall not be able to abide his Indignation, said the Prophet, *Jer. x. 10.*

And the Prophet *Isaiab*, declaring God's Indignation against the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, for their Sins, says to them ; *Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of Hosts with Thunder, and with Earthquake, and great Noise, with Storm, and Tempest, and the Flame of devouring Fire,* *Isaiah xxix. 6.*

And doubtless, when any other People fall under the like Guilt, they fall under the like Threatenings, which will be executed when ever the Lord pleases.

The Divine Power is never idle, or inactive : As it did act in the Creation of the Universe, so it is always

always acting in upholding, preserving, and regulating all the Parts of it: and some Things appear to be the immediate Effects of the Divine Agency; particularly, the Course of the Wind, whence, and whither it blows, Storms, and Tempests, Thunderings, and Lightenings, and Earthquakes. *They that go down to the Sea in Ships, that do Business in great Waters; these see the Works of the Lord, and his Wonders in the Deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy Wind, which lifteth up the Waves thereof,* Psal. cix. 23, 24, 25.

The Agency of the Power of God appears likewise in his Management of Things in the Moral World, the Concerns of rational Creatures, the Things in which Nations, Cities, and Families, and particular Persons are concerned. *Shall there be Evil in the City, and the Lord hath not done it,* it is said, *Amos iii. 6.*

FAMINES, and PESTILENCES, and EARTHQUAKES are tremendous Judgments of the Almighty and Holy God, by which Multitudes have been destroyed; yet, tremendous as they are, they are mentioned by our Blessed Saviour as foregoing SIGNS of greater Miseries. For after he had foretold them, he says, *All these are the Beginning of Sorrows.* Mat. xxiv. 8.

And have not *Famines, and Pestilences, and Earthquakes,* been lately in divers Places? And hath not the Inhabitants of *Great Britain,* and its Cities, long, even through the Course of many Years, been provoking the Most High? Have they not been regardless of his Laws, affronting his Authority, and defying his Justice, and his Power? And do they not still go on in their evil Ways, and in a dreadful Rebellion against him? And what will be the End of such a desperate Course! Are not greater Calamities, and greater Destructions of Sinners, to be feared, and expected?

The Prophet *Isaiab* having expostulated with the Inhabitants of *Judab* for their Wickedness, and In-corrigibleness, under those Judgments, which had been inflicted on them, adds, (*Isaiab* i. 24.) *Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine Adversaries, and avenge me of mine Enemies.* And who are these? Doubtless, all who lead ungodly Lives: They evidently appear to be God's Enemies by their wicked Works: and inexpressible are the Terrors of the Time, when the Righteous God shall avenge himself of them.

I may likewise observe, that after the Prophet had said to the Lord, *Thou hast forsaken thy People*, he says to the People, *Enter into the Rock, and hide thee in the Dust for Fear of the Lord, and for the Glory of his Majesty*, (vid. *Isaiab* ii. 6, 10.) And he foretels their going *into the Clefts of the Rocks, and into the Tops of the ragged Rocks, for Fear of the Lord, and for the Glory of his Majesty, when he shall arise to shake terribly the Earth.*

When the incorrigible Sinners shall come to see the dreadful Execution of God's threatened Judgments, when the Arrows of his Wrath shall fly thick around them, when they shall hear nothing but dreadful Tidings, when they shall hear and see of many Families, and Multitudes destroyed, or reduced to extreme Distress and Misery, who a little before enjoyed Health, Prosperity, and Peace; when Dangers thicken about them, when their guilty Souls shall be filled with horrible Fears, they may fly from their Dwellings, and seek hiding Places for their Security, but they cannot fly from God, nor get out of the Reach of his Arm: Whithersoever they shall go, the Just God is there; if in the City there comes a Pestilence, or Famine, without it the Sword may devour.

And

And altho' the Wicked, in a Time of Tranquillity, may for a while be stupid, and fearless, yet when God proceeds in a Controversy with them, he will make their Hearts to ach, and their Flesh to tremble, and fill their Souls with Consternation, and amazing Terrors. Then the Sinners in *Zion* will be afraid, then Fearfulness will surprize the Hypocrites.

There is Reason, as I have observed, to think that the Day of the Lord's Visitation of this Land for Sin is begun, and proceeding; and therefore the Hearts of ungodly Sinners may well faint with the Apprehension of the Evils that may justly be expected.

I say not these Things to drive any to Despair, but to excite them immediately to seek Peace, and Reconciliation, with the Holy God, through Faith in the Blessed Jesus, who is both able and willing to save even the chief of Sinners, who return to God through him.

There is still Room to hope for Mercy and Pardon. Therefore it is that the LORD still waits, even that he may be gracious unto us.

If the Inhabitants of our Cities, if the People of our Land, will, like the *Ninevites*, believe God, and fast and humble themselves, and cry mightily unto God, and turn every one from his evil Ways, and from the Violence that is in their Hands, God will turn from his fierce Anger, and we shall not perish. (vid. *Jonah* iii.)

For the Lord hath said, *At what Instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that Nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them.* Jer. xviii. 7, 8.

But we can have no well-grounded Hope of escaping the destroying Judgments of God, of God long provoked, till we see a great Reformation in our Cities and Nation.

Reformation is the Thing which the World, and the Providence of God do loudly call for; and that I may thro' the divine Blessing be an Instrument of his bringing a sinful People to Repentance, Faith, and Holiness, in Heart and Life, I shall give an Account of some Sorts of *Persons*, whom God will punish in the Day of his awful Visitation for Sin.

The Word of the Lord is the Derision of profane Sinners in these Days, no less than in Time past; yet the divine Providence is always fulfilling his Word.

We read *David* say to God, *Thou hast magnified thy Word above all thy Name*, Psal. cxxxviii. 2. The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit (Ephes. vi. xvii.) It is the great Means by which the holy Spirit subdues Sinners, and brings them to the Obedience of Faith, and by which he enableth Believers to conflict with, and overcome their spiritual Enemies, the Principalities, and Powers, and the Rulers of the Darkness of this World.

But the Generality of People are Strangers to the Word of God, and many who scoff at it never read it; yet the Time will come, will surely come, when all Men will be made to know somewhat of it, for they will be judged according to it.

It is certainly very reasonable, and needful, when God is risen out of his Place to punish the Inhabitants of the the Earth for their Iniquities, very needful, I say, to acquaint them with what the Word of the Lord has spoken concerning *various Sorts of Sinners*, and let them observe whether God in the Course of his Providences will not act according to the *Declarations* upon Record in his holy Word; and consider whether it is not their Interest, as well

as Duty, to seek Peace with God, that so they may escape the Evil he has threatned.

And it deserves the most serious Notice, and Consideration, that the following Sorts of Persons are particularly threatned with Punishments in the Day of God's Visitation for Sin: And happy will it be if those guilty Sorts of People, shall ponder in their Minds, what the Lord hath said concerning them, and be prevailed with to fly from that Wrath which is coming on the Children of Disobedience, by flying to the blessed Jesus with the Wings of Faith, and becoming his true Disciples, new Creatures in him, sanctified by his Spirit, and made fruitful in Holiness by Union, and Fellowship with him.

I. Those Ministers of the Word of God, of every Denomination, who either set bad Examples, or live in the Neglect of the Duty they owe to the People under their Care, are one Sort of Persons particularly threatned by the holy God.

I mention these by Way of Preface, because they are as Stewards of the Mysteries of God (1 Cor. iv. 1.) and have in Charge to teach the People, the Doctrines, the Statutes, the Commandments and the Ordinances of God; and because their bad Examples, and Neglect of the Duties of their Ministry, are sad Occasions of Irreligion, and Wickedness among the People.

In *Isaiab* v. 6, 9—12. the Word of the LORD says, *All the Beasts of the Field come to devour, yea, all the Beasts of the Forest. His Watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant, they are all dumb Dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy Dogs, which can never have enough, and they are Shepherds that cannot understand: They all look to their own Way, every one for his Gain from his Quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch Wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong Drink, and to-morrow*

morrow shall be as this Day, and much more abundant.

By *Watchmen*, and *Shepherds*, were meant the *Prophets* and *Priests*, who, in the Days of ISAIAH, were Ministers of the Word of God, who ought to have understood it, and been able to instruct the People in it, able to teach them, what God would have them to know, to believe, and to do; they ought to be Men free from Avarice, and of great Sobriety.

The Passages cited shew, that the following Sorts of bad Ministers, are plainly threatned with Destruction in the Day of the Lord's Visitation.

1. Those Ministers, who are *ignorant*, ignorant of those Things, which God would have them teach the People, and so are no more capable of performing their Office, than Watchmen who are blind can see an approaching Danger, and thereupon give Warning of it, or guide People in the Way they should go, but are like dumb Dogs, that cannot bark to give Notice when a Wolf is coming: Their Ignorance rendering them incapable of acquainting the People under their Care, with the Dangers their Souls are exposed to.

2. Those *lazy, careless* Ministers, who wilfully neglect to perform the Duties of their sacred Function, and indulge themselves in Ease, Idleness, and Sloth. This is manifestly imported in those Expressions, *sleeping, lying down, and loving to slumber*.

3. Those *covetous Ministers*, who, tho' negligent of the Service they owe to their People, yet are for getting as much from them as they can, making their own secular Interest their chief Concern. This is plainly signified by those Words, *viz. they are greedy Dogs, which can never have enough—they all look to their own Way, every one for his Gain from his Quarter*.

4. Those

4. Those *tipsing* Ministers, who are fond of strong Liquors, and encourage others to drink with them to excess, and speak Words, and act according to the Import of Verse 12. *Come ye, say they, I will fetch Wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong Drink, and To-morrow shall be as this Day, and much more abundant.*

In *Jerem. ii. 8, 9.* are these Words, *viz. The Priests said not, Where is the Lord? And they that handle the Law knew me not, the Pastors also transgressed against me, and the Prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after Things that do not profit. Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your Children's Children will I plead.*

These Words shew, that the holy God has a Controversy with ungodly Ministers, who are destitute of the saving Knowledge of him, and live in Disobedience to him; such Ministers, instead of obtaining a Blessing on their Children, expose them to a Curse, and the Lord will deal with those Parents in a Way of Wrath.

In *Jerem. xxiii. 2.* it is written, *Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the Pastors, that feed my People, Ye have scattered my Flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: Behold! I will visit upon you the Evil of your Doings, saith the LORD.* Which Words shew, that God will visit upon such Pastors, as will not faithfully perform their Duty, but neglect the Care of their People, that he will visit upon them the Evil of their Doing.

The Apostle not only taught the People publicly, but from House to House, teaching Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (see *Acts xx. 20, 21.*) but those Ministers who will not imitate the Example of the Apostle, but neglect to visit their Sheep, and behave so, as to drive them
from

from attending the sacred Ministrations, provoke the Anger of God, and have Reason to expect a Feeling the bitter Effects of it.

In *Ezek. xxii. 26, 31.* the righteous God says, *Her Priests have violated my Law, and have profaned mine holy Things: They have put no Difference between the Holy and Profane, neither have they shewed Difference between the Unclean and the Clean, and have hid their Eyes from my Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. I have consumed them with the Fire of my Wrath: Their own Way have I recompensed upon their Heads, saith the LORD God.* These Passages shew, that those Ministers of God in sacred things, who (regardless of their Duty) admit ungodly Persons to those divine Ordinances which are the peculiar Privilege of the Righteous, and reject the Righteous for whom they were appointed, and who will not look into, and observe the Laws of the Sabbath, to keep it holy, have Reason to be afraid, that the just God will pour out his Indignation upon them, and consume them in the Day of his Visitation for Sin.

Happy for them will it be, if those Ministers of the Word of God, who are the Objects of the Threatnings mentioned, shall consider and lay them to Heart, and make the right Improvement of them.

II. *Profane Persons*, who scoff at serious Things, who deride the Providence, or the Word, or the Commandments, or the Sabbaths, or the Ordinances, or the Worship, or the People of God, are Objects of his Visitation and Wrath.

The Words and Actions of these Persons shew an Enmity against God, and an impious Contempt of his Authority, and Laws, and a proud Disdain of his People: And they bring upon themselves the Character of *Scorners*, or of being scornful.

In *Prov.* iii. 33, 34. it is said, *The Curse of the Lord is in the House of the Wicked—surely he scorneth the Scorners.* And in *Prov.* xix. 29. it is declared, *That Judgments are prepared for Scorners.* And therefore this Sort of Sinners have Reason to think, that divine Judgment will come heavy upon them in the Day of the Lord's Visitation.

Scorners are dangerous Inhabitants of a City, for it is said, *Prov.* xxix. 8. *Scornful Men bring a City into a Snare.*

These are Transgressors of the first Command, which, as it forbids the having any other God, so it signifies, that it is our Duty to acknowledge, love, and reverence the true God, and have Respect to all his Statutes, and Ordinances, which these Sinners contemn and despise.

III. IDOLATERS. There are two Sorts of *Idolatry*; one, a Transgression of the *first* of the Ten Commandments, the other, a Violation of the Second of them.

And those Persons are guilty of transgressing the first Commandment, who own, or acknowledge any Creature as God, or who pay religious Respect or Reverence, by any inward Action of their Minds, or Gesture of their Body, to any Creature as God and the Object of their Worship.

These Actions are an Acknowledgment of such a Creature as God, and is the having another God before the Face, or besides JEHOVAH, the one only living and true God; and is the Sin, the Idolatry forbidden in *Exod.* xx. 3 where the Almighty says, *Thou shalt have no other God, before Me.*

And this is a most heinous Impiety; because it is an Acknowledgment of divine Perfections, *Wisdom, Knowledge, Holiness, Power, and Goodness,* to be the Attributes of such a Creature, and a giving to such a Creature the Glory due to God alone.

And

And since God has given to Man an Understanding to know Things, and a reasoning Faculty to draw proper Conclusions, it is the more absurd and irrational in Man, to entertain an Apprehension, that any material Substance is possessed with the Attributes of that Being who formed it.

The *second* Commandment forbids Mens making any *Images* to be the *Means* of religious Worshiping the true God—As the first Commandment relates to the Object of divine Worship, so the Second to the Means of it. It says, *Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven Image, or any Likeness of any Thing that is in Heaven above, or that is in the Earth beneath, or that is in the Water under the Earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them.* (Vid. *Exod.* xx. 4, 5.)

And as the Law forbids the making any Representations, as the Means of Worship, and the performing any bodily Actions expressive of Reverence to them; so it must be understood for the same Reasons, to forbid those internal Acts of the Mind, which signify a religious Devotion to them.

Worshipping the true God by Means of a molten or graven Image, was the *Idolatry* of the Children of *Israel*. When the golden Calf was made, the People said, *These be thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee out of the Land of Egypt,* *Exod.* xxxii. 4. *q. d.* This Image is to represent God, who delivered us from our Bondage to the *Egyptians*, we will keep in Remembrance our Deliverance, and express our Reverence of *Jehovah* our God, by Acts of Adoration to this Image.

For they kept a Feast to *Jehovah*, by Means of that golden Calf.

Aaron made Proclamation, and said, *To-morrow is a Feast to the LORD, i. e. Jehovah.* (*Exod.* xxxii. 5.) and *ver.* 6. it is said, *They rose up early on the*
Morrow,

Morrow, and offered Burnt-offerings, and brought Peace-offerings, (i. e. to *Jehovah*) and this they did by Means of the *Golden Calf*, by performing their Acts of religious Worship to it, as a Representation of God, who had brought them out of the Land of *Egypt*.

Now from what has been observed, the Nature of the Sin of *Idolatry* is very manifest, and the *Idolatry* forbidden by the second Commandment, is a very heinous Iniquity; obscuring from the Idolaters, the Brightness, the Glory of the divine Majesty, by making Images of Creatures, or other, real or imaginary, Representations of God, because such Representations can only excite false and debasing Ideas of a Being who is invisible, who never was seen, or can be seen; and whose Glory it is to be unlike all sensible Objects, and infinitely to transcend the most excellent Creatures. *To whom then will ye liken God? Or what Likeness will ye compare to him?* says the inspired Prophet *Isaiab* xl. 18. and v. 25. *To whom then will ye liken me? or shall I be equal? says the holy One.*

It is a vile Indignity to the great God, to make any Representation, or Image to be the Means of worshipping him; a Practice very provoking of his Anger.

How terrible did the holy God resent it, when the *Israelites* were guilty of it.

The Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy People which thou broughtest out of the Land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the Way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten Calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy Gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the Land of Egypt v. 7, 8.—*Now therefore let me alone, that my Wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them.* v. 10.

Moses indeed praye^d for the People, and God did not destroy them, though many of the Idolaters by his Appointment were slain.

Moses bewailed their Idolatry, and said, *O this People have sinned a great Sin, v. 27, 28.—And the Lord plagued the People, because they made the Calf which Aaron made.*

Surely the sad Examples of the *Israelites* herein, and the Manifestations of God's Wrath against them, should make all Men ever after afraid of worshipping even the true God by Means of any Images whatever.

It was the same Sort of Idolatry which *Jeroboam* King of *Israel* established by his Authority. *He took Counsel and made two Calves of Gold, and said unto them, (i. e. his Subjects) It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: Behold thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the Land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. 1 Kings xii. 28, 29.*

And thus did *Jeroboam* bring the Children of *Israel* to sin against the Lord their God.

And whoever, to express, or signify their Reverence or Worship of the most high God, shall perform Acts of Homage, Reverence, and Worship to any *Image*, molten, graven, or painted, is guilty of the like Idolatry.

God has, in very many Passages of his Word, threatened to punish Idolaters in the Day of his Visitation for Sin. And there are many Instances upon Record in the sacred Scriptures of his having done so; and it concerns every one that is guilty of this Sin, to consider that Idolaters shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. *1 Cor. vi. 9.*

IV. Proud Persons are another Sort whom the holy God has threatened to punish in the Day of his Visitation for Sin.

Various is the Fuel for Pride, *viz.* fine Houses, the Ornaments for Apparel, Furniture, Gardens, Riches,

Riches, and Equipage, Beauty, Learning and Honour, and divers other Things.

Pride is a Man's overvaluing himself on Account of some natural, or acquired, or imaginary Gifts, or Excellencies; it is when a Man thinks of himself more highly than he ought to do.

Proud Persons are Idols to themselves, and Transgressors of the first Commandment, and have not that Love to God, that Reverence of him, or that Humility of Mind which are their Duty; and God admonishes them by awful Threatnings.

In *Isaiab* ii. 11, 12. the Prophet says, *The lofty Looks of Man shall be humbled, and the Haughtiness of Men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day. For the Day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low.* And in Confirmation of this it is added v. 17. *And the Loftiness of Man shall be bowed down, and the Haughtiness of Men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day, i. e. in the Day wherein he visits for Sin.*

And concerning Women it is declared in *Isaiab* iii. 16. *Moreover the Lord saith, Because the Daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth Necks, and wanton Eyes, walking, and mincing as they go, therefore the Lord will smite with a Scab the Crown of the Head of the Daughters of Zion: v. 17.*

And the Prophet declares v. 18. *In that Day (viz. of Visitation for Sin) the Lord will take away the Bravery of their Ornaments, and greatly afflict them (read v. 18. to the End of v. 24.)*

Pride goeth before Destruction, and an haughty Spirit before a Fall, it is said *Prov.* xvi. 18.

The Prophet *Ezekiel* (in *Ezek.* xvi. 49.) said to the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, *Behold this was the Iniquity of thy Sister Sodom, Pride, Fulness of Bread (i. e.*

Luxury) and abundance of Idleness was in her, and in her Daughters. And what was the Consequence? Truly, a most dreadful and utter Destruction by Fire and Brimstone.

This Example of the divine Vengeance (with the Threatnings mentioned) they who indulge themselves in Pride, Luxury, and Idleness, have Reason to be afraid, when the righteous God executeth his Judgments for Sin.

V. Persons who are Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers of God, are another Sort that have Reason to expect a terrible Feeling of the Wrath of the Almighty, when he visits for Sin.

Sensual Delights engross the Affections of many People. It is the chief Thing they seek after; for which they take unwearied Pains, and are at Expences far beyond what their Incomings will allow; and for the Enjoyment of which many impoverish themselves and their Families.

And are not they who *love Pleasures more than they love God*, are they not in a black List? and placed with *Blasphemers, false Accusers, incontinent, fierce, Despisers of those that are good, Traitors, &c.* See 2 *Tim.* iii. 2—4.

And do not they love their Pleasures more than they love God, who neglect the Duties they owe to God, for the Sake of being present at places of publick Diversions and Entertainments?

If a Man takes all Opportunities of being in the Company of one Acquaintance, and industriously shuns the Company and Conversation of another, it is plain, to a Demonstration, that he loves the one, and dislikes, and hates the other.

And thus, as to the Lovers of Pleasure, it is most evident, that they are Haters of God, and some of his Enemies.

They go with ardent Desires to Plays, Operas, and other Places of sensual Delights, but will not endure

endure the Performance of religious Exercises in their Families, or Closets, nor will go to the Places of publick Worship.

And will not the Most High shew his Indignation against those, when he is risen out of his Place to punish People for their Iniquities?

What God said concerning *Babylon*, manifests his Indignation against this Sort of Sinners; and that they have Cause to expect the bitter Fruits of it. *Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to Pleasures, that dwellest carelessly-----these two Things shall come to thee in a Moment, in one Day, the Loss of Children, and Widowhood, they shall come upon thee in their Perfection.* Isa. xlvii. 8, 9.

The Prophet says, *Woe unto them---the Harp, and the Viol, and Tabret, and Pipe, and Wine are in their Feasts, but they regard not the Work of the Lord, neither consider the Operation of his Hands.* Isa. v. 11.

And the Prophet *Amos* says, *Woe to them that are at Ease in Zion---Ye that put far away the evil Day, and cause the Seat of Violence to come near; that lie upon Beds of Ivory, and stretch themselves upon their Couches, and eat the Lambs out of the Flock, and the Calves out of the midst of the Stall; that chant to the Sound of the Viol---that drink Wine in Bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief Ointments; but they are not grieved for the Affliction of Joseph.* See *Amos* vi. 1-7. and read *Deut.* xxviii. 15. *ad finem.*

The holy God will put an End to their Pleasures, and bring them to weeping, and howling, and bitter Lamentation, when he visits a People for their Iniquities.

The Prophet says, in *Isa.* xxviii. 21, 22. *For the Lord shall rise up as in Mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the Valley of Gibeon, that he may do his Work, his strange Work; and bring to pass his A1, his strange A1. Now therefore be ye not Mockers, lest your Bands be made strong; for I have heard from*
the

the Lord God of Hosts, a Consumption even determined upon the whole Earth.

Then the Mirth of Tabrets ceaseth, the Noise of them that rejoice endeth, the Joy of the Harp ceaseth— All Joy is darkened, the Mirth of the Land is gone, (Isaiah xxiv. 8, 11.) Thus it will be, when God is punishing the Inhabitants of a Land for their Iniquities.

Then will I cause to cease from the Cities of Judah, and from the Streets of Jerusalem, the Voice of Mirth, and the Voice of Gladness, says the righteous God, speaking of the Time when he would inflict his Judgment for the Iniquities of his People.

These Declarations of the Almighty deserve the Notice of them who indulge themselves in sensual Pleasures.

VI. PROFANERS of the holy Name of God, are another Sort of Sinners that have Reason to expect Punishment in the Day of Visitation for Sin.

I understand by Profaneness, an irreligious Treatment, by Words or Actions, of somewhat sacred, in Violation of the divine Laws concerning it.

God is greatly to be feared in the Assembly of the Saints : and to be had in Reverence of all them that are about him, (Psalm lxxxix. 7.) Holy and reverend is his Name, (Psalm iii. 9.)

All the Names, the Titles, Attributes, the Providence and Word of the Most High, even every Thing by which he has made himself known, ought always to be mentioned and treated with Seriousness and Reverence.

But all those Words and Actions of Men relating to them, which signify a Contempt of them, or a Want of Reverence to God, are Instances of Profaneness.

Thou

Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain. Exod. xx. 7.

People take the Name of God in vain, when they use or mention it for trifling and vain Purposes; as many do in common Discourse, without any Occasion; and when it can only serve to shew an Irreverence of the Great Jehovah, and to set bad Examples to all that hear them.

But let such profane Sinners remember, that tho' they may escape Punishment from Men, yet *the Lord will not hold them guiltless*, and let them consider the tremendous Import of that Declaration.

It is yet a more aggravated Profaneness of the Name of God, when Men *swear falsely* by it; because it is an impious Calling on God, or appealing to him, as Witness to a Falsehood, and is a concealing of Truth, or something which should be known, and is often injurious to others. It is speaking a Lye with an Oath.

Hear ye this—whom swear by the Name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in Truth, not in Righteousness, said the holy God to his People, Isaiah xlviii. 1. Will ye swear falsely—And come, and stand before me, and say, we are delivered to do all these Abominations.—Behold, even I hath seen it, saith the Lord. Therefore I will cast you out of my sight. Jer. vii. 9, 11.

Because of Swearing the Land mourneth, said the Prophet, Jer. xxiii. 10.

Hear the Word of the Lord, ye Children of Israel, (said Hosea) for the Lord hath a Controversy with the Inhabitants of the Land, because there is no Truth, nor Mercy, nor Knowledge of God in the Land. Therefore shall the Land mourn. Hof. iv. 1, 3.

This is the Curse that goeth forth over the Face of the whole Earth, for every one that stealeth shall be cut off,

off, as on this Side, and every one that sweareth SHALL BE CUT OFF, as on that Side, according to it, it is said, Zech. v. 3.

There is yet another, and a very dreadful Sort of profaning the Name of God, that is, when a Man, on any Provocation from another, shall pray to God to damn him, or that the Plague may take him, or that some other Evil may befall him.

This is a profane Practice, which not only transgresses the Laws of God, which requires us to love our Enemies, to love all Men, to pray for them which despitefully use us, but it is a treating God as if he was to fulfil their malicious Desires, and to make his Power to subserve their immoral Wishes; and such have abundant Reason to expect Punishment, when God visits for Sin.

VII. PROFANERS of God's Sabbaths are another Sort of Sinners, which provoke God to send destroying Judgments.

The Sabbath is profaned, when People fall into a Dislike of it, and wilfully mispend the Time of it, transgressing those Laws, which require us to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy, *i. e.* to employ it in religious Exercises, except what Time must be taken up in the Works of Necessity and Works of Mercy.

They who wilfully neglect the holy Convocation of People, appointed to be on the Sabbath, and will not give their Attendance on the Offices of the publick Worship of God, but transact their secular Affairs, buy and sell, or receive or make Visits of Entertainment, or take their Recreations and Pleasure on the Day, or spend the Time in Idleness, are Profaners of the Sabbath.

Six Days shalt thou labour, and do all thy Work, (i. e. about thy worldly Affairs) but the seventh Day

is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any Work, thou, nor thy Son, nor thy Daughter, nor thy Man-Servant, thy Maid-Servant, nor thy Cattle, nor the Stranger that is within thy Gates.

And the holy God says, *If thou turn away thy Foot from the Sabbath, from doing thine own Pleasure on my holy Day, and (shalt) call the Sabbath a Delight, the Holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own Ways, nor finding thine own Pleasure, nor speaking thine own Words. Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high Places of the Earth, and feed thee with the Heritage of Jacob thy Father; for the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.* Isa. lviii. 13, 14.

It appears from these Passages, that God does not allow us on the Sabbath, either to do any worldly Business, or to gratify ourselves even with those Recreations and Pleasures, which are lawful on other Days: It appears, that if we prize the Day of Sacred Rest, and take Delight in the religious Exercises of it, and abstain from our own secular Works, and Words, and Pleasures, we shall then please our most gracious God, and have his Blessing upon us, and have his Blessing manifested to us by kind Dispensations of his Providence towards us: And it appears also, that if we allow ourselves to break his Laws concerning the Sabbath, we provoke his Wrath.

God hath promised to them that keep his Sabbaths, and choose the Things that please him, and take hold of his Covenant, that he will give them *an everlasting Name, that shall not be cut off*: That them who *join themselves to the Lord to serve him, and to love the Name of the Lord to be his Servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of his Covenant, even them will he bring to his holy Mountain, and make them joyful in his House of Prayer.* Read Isaiah lvi.

But most tremendous are the Declarations of the righteous God against his own People for profaning his Sabbath.

That is an awful Declaration of the LORD of Hosts in *Ezek. xx. 21.*

They polluted my Sabbaths : Then I said I would pour out my Fury upon them. And this Impiety is mentioned as one Cause of destroying Judgments, and of God's with-holding his Favour and Blessing. *v. 13, 10, 4.*

This Irreligion is reckoned among the crying Sin of the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, (*Ezek. xxii. 8.*) *Thou hast despised mine holy Things, and hast profaned my Sabbaths,* said the holy God.

And after the mentioning of their Provocations, God says, (*ib. v. 14.*) *Can thine Heart endure, or can thine Hands be strong in the Days that I shall deal with thee ? I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. And I will scatter thee among the Heavens, and disperse thee in the Countries, and will consume thy Filthiness out of thee ;* ver. 16.

Many People break God's Sabbaths without Remorse, because they meet with no Punishments from Men, and because the Judgments of God are not speedily executed ; but they must not think to escape so in the Day of God's Visitation for Sin : The Threatnings mentioned plainly shew, that they shall not escape.

I have, in the foregoing Particulars, considered the *Declarations* of the righteous God concerning some Sorts of Persons who are wilful, stubborn Transgressors of one or other of the four first of the Ten Commandments, recorded in *Exodus xx.* and I intended to have related some of the awful Things, which the Lord hath spoken in his Word of those, who live in wilful Disobedience to his other Commandments ; but that what has been written may

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sooner get into the Hands of those whom it chiefly concerns, I thought it needful first to publish this Part of what I proposed to offer to the most serious Thoughts of People.

The DECLARATIONS of the Judge of the whole Earth, which have been related, are indeed full of doleful Tidings, Tidings which may justly fill the Minds of People with an awful Fear and Dread of provoking the Divine Anger, and excite them to forsake their Sins.

Are not the Threatnings mentioned, the Threatnings of Almighty God, against those Sorts of Persons, who are the Objects of them! And is not the Great God able to execute them! And will he not do so, in case the Guilty remain incorrigible!

And when, in Way of his Providence, he proceeds to fulfil his Threatnings, can the guilty Sinners, against whom they are pronounced, expect to escape them? Can they fly from God? Can they get out of the Reach of his almighty Arm? Can they hide themselves, where he cannot find them? *Can any hide himself in secret Places, that I shall not see him?* SAITH THE LORD. *Jer. xxiii. 24.* *Thou shalt not be able to hide himself,* says God, *Jerem. xlix.*
10.

Every one has Reason to say unto God, as David did, *Pf. cxxxix. 1.* *O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me—thou understandest my Thought afar off—and are acquainted with all my Ways—For there is not a Word in my Tongue, but lo, O Lord thou knowest it altogether.—Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there: if I make my Bed in Hell, behold thou art there. If I say, surely the Darkness shall cover me; even the Night shall be Light about me; yea, the Darkness hideth not from thee.*

These are certain Truths : How vain and foolish is it then for guilty stubborn Sinners to seek by Flight a Safety from the Judgments God has denounced against them.

But is there no Hope ? Is there no escaping the Wrath and Vengeance of the holy God ? I answer, there is none by Flight, none by Riches, none by human Power or Policy.

Yet, blessed be the merciful God, there is some Hope remaining ; there is a Door of Hope, opened by the gracious *Declarations*, and kind Invitations which Almighty God, infinite in Goodness, has made to those who provoked him to destroy them.

Wash ye, make you clean (says our God who delights in Mercy, *Isaiab* i. 16, &c.) *Put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes, cease to do Evil, learn to do well, seek Judgment, relieve the Oppressed, judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow.*

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow ; though they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool.

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the Good of the Land. v. 19. Which implies not only that God would then pardon them, and forbear to inflict the Judgments threatened against them, but also that God would bless them, and provide carefully for them.

It is added, *ver.* 20. *But if ye refuse, and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the Sword: for the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.* Signifying, that if they would not repent of their Sins, but go on in their Trespases, and continue their Rebellion against God, they should certainly be destroyed.

In *Jerem.* xviii. 7, 8. our merciful God says, *At what Instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and*

to destroy it, if that Nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them.

In Ezek. xxxiii. 11. *As I live saith the Lord God, I have no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his Way, and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your evil Ways: for why will ye die, O House of Israel?*

In Ezek. xviii. 21, 22. it is said, *But if the Wicked will turn from all his Sins that he hath committed, and keep all my Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his Transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him.*

How amazing is the Mercy of God! What Encouragement is here to engage the Wicked to turn from their evil Ways, to repent of their Sins, and to return to God and their Duty? How should the Loving-kindness of God make us ashamed of the Transgressions and Offences we have committed against him! Is God willing to be reconciled to us, notwithstanding the Multitudes and Heinousness of our Crimes! and willing so perfectly to forgive them, that they shall not be even mentioned to us for a Reproach, and Condemnation, if we turn from all our Sins, and conscientiously keep all his Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right. And shall we not be thankful for the wonderful Manifestations of Divine Grace, and return unto the Lord our God!

O that there was such an Heart in all the Wicked! *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, (says the Prophet) call ye upon him while he is near. Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Isa. lv. 6, 7.

Ye are gone away from mine Ordinances, and have not kept them: Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts. Mal. iii. 7.

Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts, Zech. i. 3.

Now these glorious *Declarations* of God, are certain Evidences that God is willing to be reconciled to Sinners, notwithstanding the Number of their Sins, and although they have long lived in Disobedience to him: They shew that there is a Way, and a sure Way to Reconciliation and Peace with him, a sure Way to obtain Forgiveness, and the Favour of God; and therefore a sure Way to Safety, Comfort, and Happiness.

But what is the Way by which Sinners may return to God? This is a most important Enquiry, and our Blessed Saviour answers it in *John xiv. 6. Jesus saith unto him, (that is, to Thomas, ver. 5.) I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: No Man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

The sure Way of returning to God acceptably, is through Faith in Christ Jesus, the only Saviour, and the only Mediator between God and Man.

Faith in Christ is the only Way to obtain Salvation from our Sins, and Peace with God, *I am the Door; by me if any Man enter in, he shall be saved,* said our compassionate Saviour, *John x. 9.*

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the Ends of the Earth, saith our gracious Redeemer, *Isaiab xlv. 22.*

This is the Way that God in his Word has revealed, and directs us to.

And it is what the Ministers of the Gospel are to instruct us in.

They

They are to acquaint us, that there is a Fountain opened for Sin, and for Uncleanness, (*Zech. xiii. 1.*) in which we may wash, and be clean: They are to preach that the Blood of *Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all Sin*, (*1 John i. 7.*) if we believe in his Name.

They are to preach Repentance towards God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, (*Acts xx. 21.*) and to publish those *Declarations*, which the God of Mercy and Salvation has made in his Word, concerning those that repent of their Sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus, such as the following, *viz.*

Acts ii. 38. Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the Remission of Sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost.

Acts iii. 19. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, when the Times of Refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord.

And that in *John iii. 16. viz. God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.*

John i. 12. As many as received him, to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name.

John xii. 46. I am come a Light into the World, (said our gracious Saviour) that whosoever believeth on me, should not abide in Darknes.

Acts xvi. 31. It is said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

These sacred Declarations of God, shew plainly that there is a Way, and a sure Way to obtain the Pardon of Sin and eternal Life, and they shew to us what this Way is, *viz.* the Way of Repentance and Faith; or the turning from our Sins, and return-

turning to God, and the Obedience we owe unto him ; and the receiving Christ, as our Saviour, and Prince, and trusting in him alone for Salvation.

And other Declarations recorded in the divine Word, do manifest that this Way is the Way to *Safety, Comfort, and Happiness.*

It is the Way to SAFETY. For in *Deut. xxxiii. 12.* it is said, *The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in Safety by him, and the Lord shall cover him (or protect him from Evil) all the Day long.*

And in *Prov. xviii. 16.* it is said, *The Name of the LORD is a strong Tower ; the Righteous runneth into it, and is safe.*

In *John xi. 18, 19.* Thou shalt take thy Rest in Safety. *Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid.*

In *Isa. xxxii. 18.* Our God says, *My People shall dwell in a peaceable Habitation, and in sure Dwellings, and in quiet resting Places.*

And that it is the Way to COMFORT appears from such Declarations as the following, *viz.*

Psal. cxix. 165. *Great Peace (and therefore much Comfort) they have which love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them.*

In *Psal. cxii. 7.* it is said, *He shall not be afraid of evil Tidings ; his Heart is fixed trusting in the Lord.*

In *Psal. xxix. 11.* it is declared, that, *The LORD will bless his People with Peace.*

It is the good Pleasure of our heavenly Father, that they who love and serve him, should enjoy inward Peace and Consolation.

Comfort ye, comfort ye, my People, saith your God. Isa. xl. 1.

COMFORT is promised to repenting Sinners in *Isa. lvii. 18.* *I have seen his Ways, and will heal him : I will lead him also, and restore Comforts unto him.*

And

And the blessed Jesus has promised unto his Disciples the holy Spirit as a Comforter in *John* xiv. 16. saying, *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.*

This Way is also a sure Way to Happiness, to Happiness both in this World and in that which is to come.

It is declared in *1 Tim.* v. 8. *That Godliness is profitable unto all Things, having the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

The Abundance of precious Promises, Promises of Blessings, spiritual and temporal, in this World to serious Christians, who believe in the Lord Jesus, and love, and serve God in Holiness and Righteousness, the Promises of an eternal Salvation, of a Crown of Glory, of an everlasting Life, and of eternal Inheritance, (*Heb.* ix. 15.) are Evidences that there is a sure Way to Happiness.

The Apostle *Peter* says, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, to an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you,* *1 Pet.* i. 3, 4.

In this World, many are the Afflictions of the Righteous, tho' few, very few, in Comparison with the Numbers of the Mercies they enjoy; and light, very light, in Comparison with the Weight and Importance of the Blessings God has bestowed on them: But God is present with them in all their Afflictions, he puts under them the everlasting Arms, and will most certainly deliver them out of all their Troubles.

He will make all Things to issue well unto them, as appears from that Declaration, *Rom.* viii. 28.

viz. All Things work together for Good to them that love God, to them who are the Called according to his Purpose.

I have now shewed from the infallible Word of God, the Way that leads to the Suffering of his Wrath in this World, and to an endless Destruction in the next; and also the Way, and the sure Way to Safety, Comfort, and Happiness, here and for ever hereafter.

I shall now conclude this Letter, with a brief Address to those Sorts of Persons, whom the righteous God has threatned with Punishments in this World.

And let me intreat such of you to consider the awful Threatnings denounced against you. You are the Objects, the miserable Objects of the divine Anger. The LORD's Indignation is against you, his terrible Controversy is with you. You have been hitherto heaping up Wrath against the Day of Wrath; the Day of his wrathful Visitation for Sin.

And tho' he may suffer many Individuals, in each Sort of Sinners, to escape, in this World, his threatned Vengeance, yet Multitudes will be destroyed, and by a dreadful Violence be sent to take their dreadful Abode with Devils reserved in Chains under Darknes to the final Judgment.

And you do not know, that you shall not be some of this Multitude.

O ponder this in your Thoughts, and reason with yourselves in the following Manner, as you have good Cause to do so, *viz.*

“ How lamentable is my Condition! how fearful
 “ are the Threatnings of the Almighty! how
 “ shall I be able to bear the Execution of them!
 “ How bitter are the Reflections on the Iniquities
 “ of my Heart and Life! What Advantage,
 “ what Consolation have I, or can I have from
 “ those Sins, which I have indulged! How mon-
 “ strous,

“ ftrous, how heinous, how aggravated are the
“ Sins which I have been guilty of, and wilfully re-
“ peated, Times without Number! Alas! what will
“ become of me, if I ftill go on in my evil Ways!
“ God be merciful to me a Sinner! a vile Sinner, a
“ moft Hell-deferving Sinner! And may fuch a
“ one as I, hope for any Mercy? Is there a Way
“ for fuch a Transgressor as I have been, to ob-
“ tain Pardon, and Peace, and Reconciliation with
“ the holy God, whom I have fo much, and fo
“ long offended?

“ Yes, O my Soul! there is a fure Way, even
“ for the Chief of Sinners, to obtain all that
“ Mercy, Salvation and Happinefs, which guilty
“ and wretched Creatures do want.

“ The DECLARATIONS, the kind Declarations
“ of God which I have read in this Letter, and
“ which are recorded in the facred Scripture, are un-
“ deniable Proofs of it.

AN ADDRESS TO GOD.

“ And now, O moft gracious God, I humbly
“ praife and thank thee for them; I now renounce
“ all my Sins with Shame and Grief: I confefs them
“ with a Loathing of them, and acknowledge that
“ thou mighteft moft juftly destroy me. But, O
“ fpare me for Chrift’s Sake! for thy Mercy Sake!

“ I believe that the Lord *Jefus* is both able and
“ willing to fave even the Chief of Sinners, and fuch
“ a vile Sinner as I have been. I believe him to be
“ the promifed Saviour! Lord increafe my Faith!
“ Help me againft Unbelief! I take the Blessed Je-
“ fus to be my Saviour, and humbly befeech thee
“ by thy holy Spirit, thoroughly to convert, renew,
“ and fanctify me! and do thou work continually
“ in me both to will, and to do of thy good Plea-
“ fure!

“ I now devote myself to thee, to be thine in an
 “ everlasting Covenant ! I beseech thee from this
 “ Time to incline, and enable me to live according
 “ to the holy Rules of thy Word.” Amen, for
 Jesus Christ his Sake.

Suitable REFLEXIONS.

“ O my Soul reflect upon it, and consider the
 “ wonderful Patience of God towards thee, in not
 “ pouring out his Plagues upon thee, and sending
 “ thee down quick into Hell ! Think on the Riches
 “ of his Mercy manifested in giving thee this
 “ Hour for renouncing thy Sins, and for accepting
 “ the Saviour whom his Love provided ; and think
 “ on his Grace in helping thee, by his holy Spirit,
 “ to return to him through Christ ; and to trust in
 “ Christ Jesus alone for Salvation.

“ Happy Transaction, between God and my Soul
 “ this Hour !

“ If I had remained thoughtless, and inconfide-
 “ rate, and persisted in my evil Ways, some de-
 “ stroying Judgment might have put an End to my
 “ Life while I was so doing ; and then the impor-
 “ tant Transaction could never, never be performed.

“ But since I have been through Grace enabled to
 “ accept of Christ, and am become one of his Dis-
 “ ciples ; since I have devoted myself to God, and
 “ renounced all my Transgressions, I have great
 “ Reason to delight in God, as my God, and to re-
 “ joice in Christ Jesus, as being now my dear Lord,
 “ Master, and Redeemer.

“ And may well hope, that whatever Confusions,
 “ and Calamities may happen in this Country, or
 “ City, my Condition for Eternity is safe, and will
 “ be happy. Now I may lay aside all Fears of
 “ Death, even when the killing Arrows shall fall
 “ thick around me.

“ For

“ For to a good Man, the Day of Death is better than the Day of his Birth, and when his Soul becomes absent from his Body, it will be present with the Lord, and the earthy House of this Tabernacle (*viz.* of his Body) shall be dissolved; he has a *Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.* 2 Cor. v. 1.

“ And although in this World I may have Trouble, yet I may well hope for Peace in Christ Jesus; and therefore by the Help of the Holy Spirit I will continue seeking to, and trusting in the blessed Jesus, and endeavour faithfully to serve my God and Saviour to the utmost End of Life.”

Thus may every one that repents of his Sins, and thankfully accepts of Christ to be his Saviour, and Lord, as he is freely offered to all Sorts of Sinners in the Gospel; thus, I say, may every such Person reason within himself, and be comforted.

I will only add, that it is my earnest Prayer for those who have hitherto been regardless of God, of an Interest in Christ and their Duty, and thoughtless of the Concerns of their immortal Souls, and hitherto walked in Ways of wilful Disobedience to the pure and holy Commandments of God, that they may by his Spirit have the foregoing Thoughts made their own, and their Souls inclined, and enabled to perform those Acts signified by the Expressions in the Address to God.

O merciful God! hear this Prayer, and grant these Petitions for Jesus Christ's Sake! and for the glorious Manifestation of the Energy and Sovereignty of thy Grace, and of the Riches of thy Love! Amen. And let every one that shall read these Papers say Amen.

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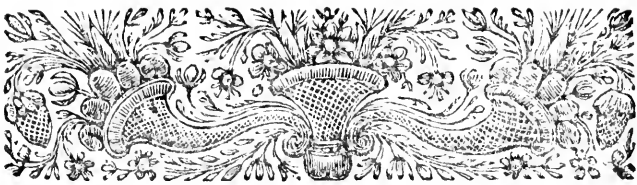
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LETTER II.

TO THE

INHABITANTS of LONDON and WEST-
MINSTER, and all other Parts of
GREAT-BRITAIN, &c.

IHAVE in my former Letter considered some of the *Declarations* of the Holy God, concerning *seven* Sorts of Persons; Declarations, which signify that he has appointed them for suffering the fearful Effects of his Wrath in the Day of his Visitation for Sin; and happy for them will it be, if they shall read; and seriously consider what has been related; and if they shall without Delay repent of their Sins, and by a Faith unfeigned accept of Christ Jesus, as their only Saviour, and join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual Covenant, never to be forgotten: Then will their State be safe for Eternity, then, in what Manner soever, and whenever Death shall happen to them, their Entrance into the invisible World, the World of Spirits, and their Appearance before the more immediate, and glorious Presence of God will be most joyful: Then they will be admitted to an inexpressibly more full Enjoyment of our God and Saviour, than any Saints ever had

on Earth; then they will be in the Company, and in Communion with the Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Apostles, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect; those happy Souls, who would not be again in this Vale of Tears, in this Wilderness of Snares, expos'd to Temptations, Dangers, and Troubles, for ten thousand Worlds: And even as to this World, as soon as ever a Sinner is convinced of his guilty and miserable Condition by Nature, and Practice, and thereupon repents and believes in the Lord Jesus, and is converted from his evil Ways, our merciful God is reconciled to him, forgives all his Iniquities, adopts him into the Number of his dear Children, and makes him an Heir of Heaven: The Almighty becomes his God in a Covenant Relation, and his Portion; and therefore, he may then have Peace, and Joy, whatever Vials of divine Wrath shall be poured out upon the Earth, for the Wickedness of those who dwell in it.

Such pious Persons may be comforted, and say with the Psalmist, Psal. xlvi. 1, &c. *God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in Trouble. Therefore will we not fear (tho' dreadful Earthquakes happen, nay) though the Earth be removed, and tho' the Mountains be carried into the midst of the Sea, though the Waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the Mountains shake with the Swelling thereof: There is a River, the Streams whereof shall make glad the City of God (there are such Communications of Grace, Blessing, and Comfort, as shall make glad the Hearts of the Inhabitants of the City of God, the true Members of his Church) God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved, God shall help her and that right early. The LORD of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our Refuge.*

The Safety, the Comfort, and the Happiness of those, who through the divine Grace have an Interest in Christ, and which any others (who hitherto remain

main impenitent, unbelieving, and disobedient) may yet obtain, should excite all Sorts of Sinners to attend to whatever may be proposed from the Word of God, in order to promote their Conversion to him, and excite them to fly from that fearful Wrath, which is coming apace on the Children of Disobedience.

Indeed, they who have hitherto been regardless of God, and of a Saviour, and negligent of the Concerns of their never-dying Souls, and have lived in the allowed Practice of Sin, may well reason thus with themselves, *viz.* “ Since there is a God, an
 “ Holy, and a Mighty God ; since these Scriptures
 “ called the BIBLE, contain the *Declarations* of his
 “ Will, and since in those sacred Scriptures are re-
 “ corded not only Promises of Blessings to those who
 “ know, and love, and serve the Lord ; but like-
 “ wise Threatnings of heavy Judgments against va-
 “ rious SORTS of Persons, who live in wilful Dis-
 “ obedience to his Laws, who provoke his Anger,
 “ and continue to do so ; I will no longer be stupid,
 “ and thoughtless, but will read the *Declarations* of
 “ the Righteous God, and observe whether I am in
 “ one or other of those Sorts of Persons, whom he
 “ has marked out for suffering Punishment in a time
 “ of general Calamity, in the time when Multitudes
 “ will be destroyed by divine Judgments : And
 “ now, O most merciful God, I humbly beseech
 “ thee to help me to read thy Threatnings with
 “ Attention, and do thou so impress my Mind by
 “ thy holy Word, that I may not only know the
 “ Evils threatned against stubborn Transgressors of
 “ thy Laws, but be inclined, and enabled to follow
 “ the Directions of thy Word, for gaining thy
 “ Favour, and the Salvation I want.”

I wish that such a Disposition of Mind, as is signified by the foregoing Expressions, was in every ir-

religious Person, that shall take this Letter into his Hands.

There are several Sorts of Persons, who live in wilful Disobedience to one or other of the *six* last of the Ten Commandments, and who are Objects of tremendous *Declarations* upon Record in the Sacred Scriptures, and it greatly concerneth such to consider what the Lord hath spoken of them.

And therefore I proceed to take these into Consideration, *viz.*

VIII. REBELLIOUS *Persons.* These are another Sort under the Threatnings of the Holy God.

REBELLION is a wilful Opposition to the Authority, and lawful Commands of *natural*, or *spiritual*, or *civil* Parents.

It is God's Ordinance that natural Parents shall have Authority, and a Right of ruling, and commanding their Children; and that those whom God has set among his People as spiritual Guides, and Teachers of his Word, of his Doctrines and Precepts, shall have Authority to instruct the People in them, and to require them to believe his Doctrines, and to obey his Precepts; and likewise, it is the Will of God that Kings, and subordinate Magistrates, shall have Authority over their Subjects to Command Obedience to those Laws which are consistent with the divine Precepts, and for the Good of the Community.

As to natural Parents, The Moral Law of God, a Law in all Nations, and in all Ages of equal Force: This Law says, *Honour thy Father and thy Mother, that thy Days may be long upon the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*, Exod. xx. 12. in *Ephes. vi. 1, 2, 3.* it is written, *Children obey your Parents in the Lord: For this is right. Honour thy Father and thy Mother (which is the first Commandment*

mandment with Promise) that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the Earth.

The Honour, and Obedience, which God requires Children to render to their Parents, shou'd cheerfully be performed by them, as a Part of that Conformity, which they owe to the divine Precepts, (God having appointed their Parents to be their Teachers, Guides, and Governors) and as some Return (tho' not equivalent) to the Obligations they are under for their Lives, their Maintenance, their Education, and for the tender Care of them under Sicknesſes, and other Afflictions, and Troubles, and for their Expences, and Diligence to introduce them into a comfortable Way of Subsistence for themselves, and new Families, when they are grown up to settle in the World.

But if Children are refractory, and disobedient, if they come to despise, and mistreat their Parents, and instead of administering Comfort to them, they bring Disgrace upon them, and occasion heart-breaking Sorrows, and Grievs unto them; they subvert the Order, God has established, they throw the Families to which they belong into Confusion, they are found in the Number of the Rebellious, and greatly provoke the Wrath of the Almighty, and are among *rebellious* Persons.

The alwise, and righteous God pronounces such Children *rebellious*, and commanded that they shou'd be put to death. In *Deut. xxi. 18, 19.* the supreme Lawgiver said, *If a Man has a stubborn, and rebellious Son, which will not obey the Voice of his Father, or the Voice of his Mother, and that when they have chasten'd him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his Father and his Mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the Elders of his City, and unto the Gates of his Place: And they shall say unto the Elders of his City, This our Son is stubborn, and rebellious, he will not obey our Voice, he is a Glutton, and a Drunkard.*

And

And all the Men of his City, shall stone him with Stones, that he die : So shalt thou put away Evil from among you, and all Israel shall bear, and fear.

It appears from these Passages that a Course of wilful Disobedience to Parents, was by God's Appointment a capital Crime, a Crime to be punished with Death : And that altho' the Punishment has not for many Ages been inflicted by Men, and Children on this Account are more fearless of being guilty of the Crime, God is nevertheless provoked, and it may be reasonably apprehended (tho' the guilty are suffered to escape Punishment among Men) that God will not suffer them to escape, when he visits a Land for the Iniquities of those that dwell in it.

As for those whom God has appointed to be spiritual Guides to his People, Teachers, and Ministers of his Word, we have the following Laws to direct our Behaviour towards them, *viz.*

In *Theff.* v. 12, 13. where St. Paul says, *We beseech you Brethren, to know them, which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you ; and to esteem them very highly in Love for their Works Sake.*

In *Heb.* xiii. 7. it is written, *Remember them which have the Rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God : Whose Faith follow, considering the End of their Conversation.* And in the 17th Verse of that Chapter it is said, *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit yourselves : For they watch for your Souls, as they that must give Account, that they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief : For that is unprofitable for you.*

These divine Precepts teach us the following Particulars, *viz.* 1. That it is our Duty to respect, and love the Ministers of the Gospel, and to become acquainted with those of them whose Labours we attend. 2. That so far as they deliver to us the
Word

Word of God, it is our Duty to receive it, and to be obedient to it: But it is our Duty also to examine every Doctrine they teach, and every Instruction, which (as a Matter of Practice incumbent on us) they inculcate: We are, I say, to examine them by the sacred Scriptures, and not to receive them merely because delivered by our Teachers.

The Word of the Lord plainly shews, he would have us to take this Course.

When our blessed Saviour preached to the *Jews*, he directed, and commanded them to *search the Scriptures*, see *John* v. 29. he appealed to those sacred Writings as a Proof of the Verity of his Doctrine, saying, *they, are they which testify of me.*

The Commendation given of the *Bereans*, (*Acts* xvii. 11.) on the Account that *they searched the Scriptures daily* (to know) *whether those Things* (the Apostle preached) *were so*; that is, were according to them, is an Evidence that God wou'd have us to examine by the Scriptures, the Things we hear preached.

And our doing this is a Matter of Importance, as we may reasonably conclude from the Injunction which Christ gives to all People, *Mark* iv. 24. *Take heed what you hear.* This Precept imports, that it is the Duty of every one, that hears, to examine by the Scriptures what is spoken, and thereby to judge, whether it is true, and fit to be received, or not.

Further, That we are thus obliged, appears from *Isa.* viii. 19, 20. in the 19th Verse the Prophet shews the People, that they ought not to be influenced by those, who would persuade them to seek for Instruction and Direction to them that have familiar Spirits, but shou'd apply themselves to God, and his Word, if they wou'd know his Will, and their own Duty. *Shou'd not a People seek unto their God? To the Law, and to the Testimony: If they (if Men, or Angels from Heaven) speak not according*

to this Word (the Word of the Lord delivered by his Servants the Prophets) it is *because* there is *no Light* (or Truth) in them.

And again, 1 *John* iv. 1. it is said, *Believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits, whether they are of God: Because many false Prophets are gone out into the World.*

But if any People shall oppose, or obstruct the Ministers of the Gospel in the faithful Performance of their Office, and in preaching, not their own private Opinion, but the Word of God, they are guilty of an heinous Sin, and hinder the Success of the Gospel Ministry, and greatly provoke God; and altho' they may not be liable to Punishment from Men, yet they have Reason to fear the the Effects of the divine Displeasure, when the Judgments of the Almighty are brought on a Land for the Iniquities of the People.

As for Kings and subordinate *Magistrates*, God by his Law requires those under their Authority to honour, and to obey them.

Kings, and Queens may be considered as political, or civil Parents. *Kings shall be thy Nursing-fathers, and their Queens thy Nursing-mothers*, it is said in *Isaiah* xlix. 23.

The great God has said, *Honour the King* (1 *Pet.* ii. 17.) I counsel thee to keep the King's Commandment, and that, in *Regard of the Oath of God*. (It is written in *Eccles.* viii. 2.) *That first of all, Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and giving of Thanks be made for all Men: For Kings, and for all that are in Authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life in all Godliness and Honesty. For this is good, and acceptable in the Sight of God our Saviour.* (1 *Tim.* ii. 1, 2, 3.) *Curse not the King, no not in thy Thought.* *Eccles* x. 21. Thou shalt not revile the Gods (the Judges, as the Word is translated in the Margin) nor curse the Ruler of thy People, (*Exod.* xxii. 28.)

The

The holy God by his Apostle says, *Let every Soul be subject unto the higher Powers. For there is no Power but of God: The Powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the Power, resisteth the ordinance of God: And they that resist, shall receive unto themselves Damnation.* Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

And therefore, they who refuse due Honour and Obedience to the lawful Magistrate, have Reason to be afraid of the divine Wrath in the Day when God visits a Land for the Iniquities of the Inhabitants. The Apostle adds, *Wilt thou not then be afraid of the Power, &c. Ye must needs be subject not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience Sake. For, for this Cause, pay you Tribute also; for they are God's Ministers, &c.* Render therefore unto all their Dues: *Tribute, to whom Tribute is due, Custom, to whom Custom, Fear, to whom Fear, Honour, to whom Honour.* See Rom. xiii. 3, 5, 7.

It is a Charge committed to the Ministers of the Word of God to teach the People the Duty they owe to their civil Governours; in *Tit. iii. 1. Put them in mind to be subject to Principalities, and Powers, and to obey Magistrates.*

And the divine Law says to the People, *Submit yourselves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake: Whether it be to the King, as Supreme; or unto Governours, as unto them that are sent by him for the Punishment of evil Doers, and for the Praise of them that do well.* 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14.

Fear thou the LORD, and the King: And meddle not with them that are given to Change. For their Calamities shall rise suddenly, and who knoweth the Ruin of them both. See Prov. xxiv. 21, 22.

It may well be observed, that those who resist Magistrates in the right Exercise of their Authorities, and rebel against their lawful Governours, not only expose themselves to eternal Damnation in the next

World, but bring upon themselves, and their Families, Ruin, and Destruction in this.

It appears from the History of Nations, and Kingdoms that Multitudes of Persons, and Families, have been ruined and destroyed for the Sin of *Rebellion* against their lawful Governours.

The Consideration hereof shou'd restrain all People from opposing either the just authority of their King, or of the subordinate Magistrates.

IX. OPPRESSORS are another Sort of Persons, who have Reason to fear the Effects of God's Wrath in the Day of his Visitation for Sin.

As Rebellion includes in it the various Sorts of Misbehaviour, and Opposition of Inferiors to their Superiors in Authority; so OPPRESSION comprehends the several Abuses, which *Superiors* in Authority, or Power, are guilty of towards their Inferiors.

When they exact from Persons subject to them Contributions, or bodily Labours, which are not due, or when they restrain their natural Liberties, without legal Authority, or Reason, they are Oppressors, and may be reckon'd among the Transgressors of the *fifth* Commandment, which must be understood not only as obliging Inferiours to the Performance of the Duties they owe to their natural, spiritual, and civil Parents, to all in Authority over them, and to forbid every Thing that is inconsistent with the Practice of those Duties, so very reasonably it shou'd be understood to oblige all in Authority, and Power, faithfully to discharge the Duties they owe to those who are subject to them, and likewise to forbid every Thing that is inconsistent therewith, and consequently to forbid Oppression.

The Nature of the Sin of Oppression, according to the Account of it in Holy Scriptures, will be evident, if we consider *Exod. iii. 7, 9.* *The Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my People, which are in Egypt, and have heard their Cry, by Reason of Task-Masters,*

Masters, for I know their Sorrows.—And I have also seen the Oppression, wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

The Oppression, which *Pharaoh*, and his People were guilty of towards the *Israelites*, was the requiring of them unreasonable Labours, and setting over them *Task-Masters*, to afflict them with their Burdens, *Exod. i. 11.*

But this Abuse of Authority, and Power, this Mistreatment, Tyranny, and Cruelty towards Inferiors is very provoking to the merciful God.

It is an Iniquity which God has threatened terribly to punish. In *Isa. xlix. 20.* God says to his People, *I will feed them that oppress thee with their own Flesh, and they shall be drunken with their own Blood, as with sweet Wine,* and in *Jer. xxx. 26.* the Almighty says *I will punish all that oppress them.*

Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, Execute true Judgment, and shew mercy, and Compassion, every Man to his Brother. And oppress not the Widow, nor the Fatherless, nor the Stranger, nor the Poor, and let none of you imagine Evil against his Brother, in your Heart. Zech. vii. 9, 10.

I will be a swift Witness—against those that oppress the Hireling in his Wages, the Widow, and the Fatherless, and that turn aside the Stranger from his Right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of Hosts. Mal. iii. 5.

If Parents treat their Children with unreasonable Severity, and withhold from them, what, according to their Rank, and Circumstances in Life, and the Occasions of the Children, should be allowed them, they are guilty of the Sin of Oppression.

If Masters make their Servants to serve with Rigour, and by exacting unreasonable Labours, or by not allowing them Food convenient in sufficient Quantity, they embitter their Lives, they are also guilty of Oppression.

If Men of Riches, or Power, bear hard on their Inferiors, retrench the Liberties they have a Right unto, or put them unreasonably to Trouble, they are guilty of Oppression. St. James said, *Do not rich Men oppress you, and draw you before the Judgment-Seats?* James ii. 6.

But the LORD will be a Refuge for the oppressed, Psal. ix. 9. *Thus saith the LORD, execute Judgment in the Morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the Hand of the Oppressor, lest my Fury go out like Fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the Evil of your Doings,* Jer. xxi. 12.

As these Words shew the Indignation of the righteous God against those who can, and will not deliver the Oppressed from their Oppressors, so they manifest that the Wrath of almighty God is greatly provoked by the Iniquity, and Cruelty of Oppressors; and that such unmerciful Persons have Reason to expect Punishment, not only hereafter, but even in this World, when the righteous God visits a People for their Sins. *For he shall have Judgment without Mercy, that hath shewed no Mercy:* Saith the Word of the Lord, James ii. 13.

X. MURDERERS must be reckoned one Sort of Persons appointed to suffer the Vengeance of God both in this World, and the next.

He is a Murderer, that designedly, and maliciously takes away the Life of another, and he is a Transgressor of the sixth Commandment, which says, *Thou shalt not kill,* Exod. xx. 13.

And the just God has appointed that all such shall be put to death. *Whoso sheddeth Man's Blood, by Man shall his Blood be shed,* said the sovereign Lord of Life and Death. Gen. ix. 6. *He that smite a Man so that he die, shall surely be put to Death,* Exod. xxi. 13. *If a Man come presumptuously upon his Neighbour, to slay him with Guile, thou shalt take him from mine Altar, that he may die,* says God, Exod. xxi.

13, 14. In *Numb.* xxi. 13. the Almighty says, *Ye shall take no Satisfaction for the Life of a Murderer, which is guilty of Death: But he shall surely be put to Death.*

The Consideration of these Laws should deter all Men from the Crime of *Duelling*.

There is no *DUEL* fought, but one of the Parties gives the Challenge; and the Occasion of it is some Injury, some Provocation either imaginary, or real.

Oftentimes it is imaginary, some Words or Behaviour of the Person challenged, misrepresented, or misunderstood; and a cool Inquiry into the Case, would prevent a Quarrel, and confirm a Friendship.

But suppose the *Challenger* has indeed been mistreated, and suffered a real Injury, the Laws of God, and of the Land have provided a Remedy, and the Law is open to be used for obtaining Justice to one, any Way really injured.

The injured Person must not murder the Man that has offended him; such a cruel Action, is a subverting, in that Case, all the Laws, divine, and human, made to prevent so heinous a Crime.

And what is the Apology for his wicked Challenge? Is it that his Innocence of something he has been falsely accused of may be vindicated, and made manifest?

This is best done in an open Court of civil Judicature, where the real State of Things may become evident by the Testimony of Witnesses on both Sides. But his Innocence can never be cleared by his endeavouring to kill, and murder the Person that has falsely accused him, nor by his exposing himself to be murdered by the other. And the true State of the Case between the *Duellers* after their Battle, may continue to the Publick, in as much Darkness and Uncertainty as before, because of the different Accounts of it by the Friends of each Party.

Or, is the Reason of the Challenge to get Satisfaction

faction for the Affront, or Injury done him? But what Satisfaction can it be for a Man needlessly, and wickedly to expose himself to be murder'd by the Man, whom he challenges.

If the Satisfaction meant is the Gratification of a malicious Desire of taking Revenge by a wilful shedding the Blood of his Neighbour, of his Brother who has offended him, it is a wicked Satisfaction, and greatly to be abhorred; and the Desire of it ought to be contradicted: The gratifying such a Desire is an Act of Rebellion against the divine Authority, which says, *Thou shalt not kill*, Exod. xx. and which has also said, *Avenge not yourselves*, Rom. xii. 19.

And as to the *Challenged*, what is his Apology for his wicked Acceptance of the Challenge? Is it that he shall be esteemed a *Coward*, a *Man of no Courage*, if he does not accept it? Be it so, yet better for him that unreasonable Men think so, than for him (in direct Opposition to the Will, and Law of the great God) violently, and maliciously to take away the Life of another, or thus unjustifiably to expose his own.

In the Case of a DUEL, the *Challenger*, and the *Challenged* (according to their Appointment) meet at the Place fixed upon; they meet each of them with a premeditated, and malicious Design to kill, and to murder the other, in Defiance of the Authority of that God who made them both, who commands them to love each other, and to promote each others Safety and Good, and if they did so, they would find true Honour, Peace, and Comfort. But what a shameful, horrid Tragedy do they act by their Duelling.

Let the Case be rightly considered both as to the Person killing, and the Person killed: The Person killing is a Murderer with his Hands, and Heart, and the Character of being a *Murderer* will always
most

most justly belong to him : And if he truly repents, the best that can be said of him is, that he is a Penitent Murderer. But there remains an indelible Stain in his Character ; it can never be said of such a Man, that he never was a Murderer. And will the Character of being a Man of Courage compensate the just Shame, Disgrace, and Guilt of being a Murderer ?

It should likewise be considered whether the Person kill'd was fit for Death ; if not, the Murderer forced his Appearance before God, to be sent down among the accursed Spirits, to be reserved to the Judgment of the great Day.

The Murderer puts a Period to his Space for Repentance, to his Opportunity of seeking Peace with God, and eternal Salvation. Thus it is with the Person killing.

O the miserable Consequences of Duelling !

And then as to the Person killed ; he had Murder in his Heart, and no Space to repent of it. Duellers take the most effectual Course to render their everlasting Damnation, Shame, and Torment inevitable.

These six Things doth the LORD hate, yea seven are Abomination unto him : A proud Look, a lying Tongue, and Hands that shed innocent Blood, Prov. vi. 16, 17.

The Prophet *Hosea*, said (Hof. iv. 3, 4.) *By Swearing, and Lying, and Killing, and Stealing, and committing Adultery, they break out, and Blood toucheth Blood. Therefore shall the Land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish with the Beasts of the Field, and the Fowls of Heaven ; yea the Fishes of the Sea also shall be taken away.*

The righteous Providence of God often has in a most remarkable Manner discovered Murderers, and brought them quickly to suffer Death by the

Sentence of the Magistrate, according to the divine Law.

And although he may permit some of them for a while to remain undiscovered, yet in the Day of his Visitation for Sin, when he shall make Inquisition for Blood, they may be sure he will remember them, and they have Reason to fear that he will deal with them according to their Blood-guiltiness.

XI. DRUNKARDS, *Gluttons*, and *riotous Livers*, are another Sort of Persons, against whom terrible Threatnings of God are recorded in the holy Scriptures.

These likewise are Transgressors of the *sixth* Commandment, as by their Intemperance, and frequent Excesses, they impair their own Health, and shorten their Lives; that is, put an End to them as certainly, as if they thrust themselves through with a Sword, though not in so speedy a Manner.

And then by importuning their Companions to eat, or to drink to Excess, or to indulge themselves in any Pleasure inconsistent with Health, they are instrumental in destroying their Health, and hastening their Death.

But what saith the Word of God concerning such as these? In Isa. xxviii. 1, 3. it says, *Wo to the Drunkards of Ephraim, the Drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under Feet.*

In Prov. xxiii. 21. it is declared, that *the Drunkard, and the Glutton shall come to Poverty*; and there are frequent Instances of this.

In Joel i. 5. God by his Prophet says, *Awake ye Drunkards, and Weep, and howl all ye Drinkers of Wine.*

The Prophet Nabum saith, *The Lord is good, a strong Hold in the Day of Trouble* (i. e. to those who love and serve him) *and he knoweth them that trust in him. But with an overflowing Flood, he will make*

an utter End of the Place thereof, and Darknefs shall pursue his Enemies. What do ye imagine against the LORD? He will make an utter End: Affliction shall not rise up the second Time. For while they be folden together as Thorns, and while they are drunken as Drunkards, they shall be devoured as Stubble fully dry, Nahum i. 7, 8, 9, 10.

In Isa. v. 11—14. it is said, *Wo unto them that rise up early in the Morning, that they may follow strong Drink, that continue until Night till Wine inflame them. And the Harp, and the Viol, the Tabret, and the Pipe, and Wine, are in their Feasts: But they regard not the Work of the LORD, neither consider the Operation of his Hands. Therefore my People are gone into Captivity, because they have no Knowledge, and their honourable Men are famished, and their Multitudes dried up with Thirst. Therefore Hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her Mouth without Measure: And their Glory, and their Multitude, and their Pomp, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it.* In Verse 22. it is added, *Wo unto them that are mighty to drink Wine, and Men of strength to mingle strong Drink, i. e. if they abuse their Strength by drinking to Excess, and that is Excess, which is more than needful to the healthful Nourishment, and Cheerfulness of the Body.*

The Prophet further adds, in Verse 25. *Therefore is the Anger of the LORD kindled against his People, and he hath stretched forth his Hands against them, and hath smitten them: And the Hills did tremble, and their Carcasses were torn in the midst of the Streets: For all this his Anger is not turned away, but his Hand is stretched out still.*

These, and such like *Declarations* do plainly shew, that they who indulge their Appetites with Excesses in Meats and Drinks, and they who persuade, and tempt others to do so, have Reason to fear the

Judgments of the Holy God, when he is visiting for Sin.

But how much soever they may suffer by common Calamities in this World, these Sufferings will be to them only the Beginnings of Sorrows, unless they repent, and amend their Ways. For *Drun-kards shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*, See 1 Cor. vi. 10.

It is our blessed Redeemer, who said, *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time, your Hearts be over-charged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, and the Cares of this Life, and so that Day come upon you unawares. For as a Snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the Face of the whole Earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these (terrible) Things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man*, Luke xxi. 34, 35, 36.

The *Things* which Christ refers to, and which he in that Chapter foretold should come to pass, were that *Jerusalem* should be compassed with Armies, and Desolation, Verse 20. He foretold its *Days of Vengeance*, Verse 22. and that there should be great Distress in the Land, and Wrath upon the People, Verse 23. And that they should fall by the Edge of the Sword, Verse 24. That upon the Earth should be Distress of Nations with Perplexity, Verse 25. Men's Hearts failing them for Fear, and for looking after those Things, which are coming on the Earth, Verse 26.

And thus it happened to the Jews, when the just God brought upon them the Day of his Wrath, the Day of his Visiting them for their Iniquities. And in like manner it will happen to other Nations, when the Almighty shall come forth in Judgment against them, and make a sinful incorrigible People to see, and feel the Miseries of the Days of his Vengeance.

Therefore,

Therefore, *Let us walk honestly, as in the Day; not in Rioting and Drunkenness, not in Chambering and Wantonness, not in Strife and Envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof.* Rom. xiii. 13, 14.

XII. UNCLEAN PERSONS, Whoremongers and Adulterers, are another Sort, on whom God has denounced destroying Judgments.

These are Transgressors of the *seventh* Commandment.

Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge, &c. It is declared, Heb. xiii. 4. and in Galat. v. 19, 21. it is said, *Now the Works of the Flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness; and it is added, That they who do such Things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

In Ephes. v. 3, 4, 5, 6. *But Fornication and all Uncleanness, let it not be once named amongst you, as becometh Saints. Neither Filthiness nor foolish Talking, nor Jesting which are not convenient: But rather giving of Thanks. For this you know that no Whoremonger nor unclean Person — hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God — for because of these Things cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience.*

What the Holy God has said concerning the Jews, in Jer. v. 7, 8, 9. shews evidently that this Sort of Sinners are appointed to suffer in the Day of his Visitation. The LORD said, *When I fed them to the full they committed Adultery, and assembled themselves by Troops in the Harlots Houses. They were as fed Horses in the Morning: Every one neighed after his Neighbour's Wife: Shall I not visit for these Things? saith the LORD, shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?*

The Prophet *Ezekiel* also, reckoning up several Sorts of Transgressors of the divine Law in *Jerusalem*, says, *One hath committed Abomination with his Neighbour's Wife, and another has lewdly defiled his Daughter-in-Law, and another in thee hath humbled his Sister, his Father's Daughter,* Ezek. xxii.

It must be observed, that *Self-Pollution*, the Sin for which the Holy God slew *Oan*, Gen. xxxviii. 9, 10. is a Sort of Uncleanness very heinous in its Nature. And likewise that the unnatural Lusts of the *Sodomites*, Gen. xix. 5. for which *the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, Brimstone and Fire from the Lord out of Heaven, and overthrew their Cities, and all the Plain, and all the Inhabitants of the Cities, and that which grew upon the Ground,* Gen. xix. 24, 25. I say, those unnatural Lusts are Kinds of Filthiness which cry loudly for divine Vengeance to be inflicted on the Guilty: And it is Matter of great Lamentation, that notwithstanding the fearful, and utter Destruction of those Cities for the Crimes of their Inhabitants, there have been in the succeeding Ages, Persons guilty of the same monstrous and filthy Practices.

St. Paul speaketh of such in Rom. i. 26, 27. saying, *For this Cause God gave them up unto vile Affections: For even their Women did change their natural Use unto that which is against Nature: And likewise also the Men, leaving the natural Use of Women, burned in their Lust, one toward another, Men with Men, working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that Recompence of their Error which was meet.*

The Sins of these monstrous Transgressors, indeed, are secret, they are Deeds of Darkeness, but the righteous God may openly take Vengeance on them, in the Day of his Visitation for Sin. Such have no Reason to hope they shall escape the destroying Wrath of the Almighty God.

And

And as the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem* were incorrigible, and did not repent of their Iniquities, the Holy God according to his Threatnings, inflicted on them destroying Judgments. See *Jer. v. 31.* where he says, *Therefore have I poured out mine Indignation upon them, I have consumed them with the Fire of my Wrath: Their own Way have I recompensed upon their Heads, saith the LORD GOD.*

I may add, that Persons under the like Guilt, have Reason to expect like Punishment; and therefore have Cause to be afraid of God's proceeding in the Way of his Judgments.

And happy for them will it be, if the Whoremongers and Adulterers; happy will it be, if all the filthy, the unchaste, the unclean Persons of both Sexes, shall consider the Evil of their Ways, and the *Declarations* of the Holy God against them; if they shall repent of their Sins, and seek the Forgiveness of them, and Peace with God through Christ Jesus, before the Viols of his Wrath be poured out upon them.

XIII. UNJUST Persons, are another Sort against whom destroying Judgments are denounced in the Word of God.

UNJUST *Persons* are all they, who either by Force, or Fraud, take, or with-hold to their own Use any Thing that is the Property of another.

These all are Transgressors of the *eighth* Commandment.

This Class includes not only Thieves of every Denomination, but also *Extortioners*, and *fraudulent Dealers* with unjust Weights and Measures.

EXTORTIONERS are those Persons who take Advantage from the Necessities, or Ignorance of others, to constrain them to give more Money for the Things they buy, than is the Market-price, or to perform

perform more Labour for Wages than is usual according to the Custom of the Country, thus, *e. g.*

If the Sellers of any Commodity know the Buyers to be under a Necessity of getting the Things they treat about, and that they can have them no where else, or that they are ignorant of the Value, and Market-price of them, and therefore exact from them a greater Price than they are worth, or than the Sellers would insist on, if the Buyers were not under such Necessity, or such Ignorance, they are guilty of Extortion.

And if any Manufacturers, as a Method of Gain to themselves, shall keep for Sale to their Work-People, various Sorts of Goods, they at Times have Occasion for, and shall oblige them to buy such Goods, when they do not want the Goods but the Money for other Uses, they are Extortioners.

These two Sorts of Persons are guilty of Transgressing that divine Law, which says, *All Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them*, Matt. vii. 12. which implies, that *All Things whatsoever we would that Men should not do to us, we should not, we ought not to do to them.*

Thus God has manifested his holy Will concerning our Conduct and manner of Dealing with others. And the *Extortioners* above-mentioned, would not like to be themselves treated in such Manner as they treat others.

I must add, that their Crime is abominable in the Sight of God, who delights in Mercy and Goodness.

Let such Transgressors read, and consider what is said in *Ezek. xxii. 12, 13, 14. Thou hast greedily gained of thy Neighbours by Extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the LORD GOD. Behold, therefore I have smitten mine Hand at thy dishonest Gain, which thou hast made——Can thine Heart endure, or can thine*

thine Hands be strong, in the Days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken it, and will do it.

These *Declarations* shew that God will deal with Extortioners in the Days of his Visitation for Sin; and that their Hearts will not be able to endure the Tokens of his Wrath, or to sustain the strokes of his Vengeance.

There is another Sort of EXTORTION, cruel in its Nature, and abominable in the Eyes of the Lord; that is, when *Manufacturers* or others constrain the People they employ to labour for less Wages, than Custom, or particular Agreement has made their Due, or exact from them more Work than is usually done for the customary Wages; or on some unreasonable Pretence withhold from them Part of their Wages.

These may be said to grind the Face of the Poor: They oppress the Hirelings, the People they employ to labour, and the Character of Extortioners justly belongs to them.

Let such consider the Import of this Declaration in *Mal. iii. 5.* *I will come near to you to Judgment, and I will be a swift Witness—against those that oppress the Hireling in his Wages—and fear not, saith the LORD of Hosts.*

And in *James v. 4.* it is said, *Behold the Hire of the Labourers, which have reaped down your Fields, which is of you kept back by Fraud, crieth; and the Cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the Ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, who will deal with such Oppressors, and take Vengeance on them when he visits for Sin.*

In *Levit. xix. 13.* it is said, *The Wages of him that is hired, shall not abide with thee all Night until the Morning.*

In *Deut. xxiv. 15.* it is written, *At his Day thou shalt give him his Hire, neither shall the Sun go down upon*

upon it, for he is poor, and setteth his Heart upon it : lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be Sin unto thee.

In *Levit. xix. 9.* are recorded the following Laws, *viz. When you reap the Harvest of your Land, thou shalt not wholly reap the Corners of thy Field, neither shalt thou gather the Gleanings of thy Harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy Vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every Grape of thy Vineyard, thou shalt leave them for the Poor, and Stranger : I am the Lord your God.* Signifying that the great God has compassion for the Poor, and Strangers, and approves all Acts of Kindness done unto them ; and that he is both able, and willing to recompence with his Blessings, those who obey his Will, by leaving in the Time of Harvest, and Gathering of Fruit, Gleanings of their Harvest, and of the Fruit for the Poor.

In *Deut. xxiv. 19.* it is likewise enacted, by the supreme Governor of the World, thus, *viz. When thou cuttest down thine Harvest in thy Field, and hast forgot a Sheaf in the Field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it : It shall be for the Stranger, for the Fatherless and the Widow : That the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the Work of thine Hands. When thou beatest thine Olive-tree, thou shalt not go over the Boughs again : It shall be for the Stranger, for the Fatherless, and for the Widow.*

I have mentioned these Laws of our good God, because they manifest his gracious Care for Strangers, and for the Fatherless, and for Widows in needy Circumstances ; and because they are Laws always obligatory, they are divine Laws always binding all Persons, in all Ages, who are concerned in Husbandry, in Sowing, in Reaping, in Raising, and Gathering-in the Fruits of the Earth. We ought to think, and acknowledge that they are Laws still
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in Force, since God never repealed them, since neither Men, nor Angels, can annul the Obligations of his Commandments, and since divers Reasons of them, *viz.* the Wants of the Poor, and the Supply, and the Comfort they will have by Means of a due Obedience to those Laws: And I apprehended it the more needful to recite them, because many *Landholders, Farmers, and Possessors of Vineyards, and Olive Yards,* and others employed in raising and propagating the Fruits of the Earth are ignorant of them.

I must add one *Declaration* more, *viz.* that in *I Cor. vi. 10. Nor Thieves, nor Covetous—nor Extortioners shall inherit the Kingdom of God.* Therefore we may reasonably conclude, that this hard-hearted and cruel sort of Sinners, are obnoxious to the destroying Judgments of God, when he is visiting an ungodly Nation for their Iniquities.

I have further to observe, that *fraudulent Dealers, with unjust Weights and Measures,* must be reckoned among the Transgressors of the *eighth* Commandment, because by their Frauds they get so much of the Buyer's Money unjustly, as the diminished Quantity of the Goods sold amounts to in Value; and the using divers Weights and Measures, that is, Weights and Measures different from, and less than the Standard established by the Laws of the Country in which they live, is in Reality one Way of stealing Money from the Buyers.

Ye shall do no Unrighteousness in Judgment, says the divine Law, *in Metre Yard, in Weight, or in Measure. Just Balances, just Weights, a just Ephab, and a just Hin shall ye have; I am the LORD your God. Therefore shall ye observe all my Statutes, and all my Judgments, and do them; I am the Lord. Levit. xix. 35, 36, 37.*

In *Deut. xxv. 13, 14, 15, 16.* it is said, *Thou shalt not have in thy Bag divers Weights, a great and*

a small. Thou shalt not have in thine House divers Measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just Weight, a perfect and a just Measure shalt thou have; that thy Days may be lengthened in the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. For all that do such Things (viz. the keeping divers Weights and Measures) and all that do unrighteously, are an Abomination unto the LORD thy God.

In *Prov. xi. 1.* it is said, *A false Ballance is Abomination to the Lord: but a just Weight is his Delight.* And *Chap. xx. 10.* *Divers Weights, and divers Measures, both of them are alike Abominations to the Lord.* See also Verse 23.

The Prophet *Micah* said to the People (who had provoked destroying Judgments by manifold Sins) *He (viz. God) hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good, and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? The LORD's Voice crieth unto the City, and the Man of Wisdom shall see thy Name: Hear ye the Rod, and who hath appointed it. Are there yet the Treasures of Wickedness in the House of the Wicked, and the scant Measure that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked Balances, and with the Bag of deceitful Weights? For the rich Men thereof are full of Violence, and the Inhabitants thereof have spoken Lies, and their Tongue is deceitful in their Mouth. Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy Sins.* See *Micah vi. 8—13.*

These *Declarations* shew most evidently that *fraudulent Dealers*, with false Weights and Measures, have Reason to expect Punishment even in this World, when God is visiting a Nation for their Iniquities.

But if they shall escape Punishment in this World, they should know and consider, that *the Hope of unjust Men perisheth*, (*Prov. xi. 7.*) and that, *The*
LORD

LORD knoweth how—to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished. 2 Pet. ii. 9.

There is yet another Sort of Iniquity to be taken Notice of, as inconsistent with that just and righteous Manner of Dealing with others, which the *eighth* Commandment obliges all Men to, *viz.* the *Giving and Taking Bribes.*

A **BRIBE** is any Gift to another, to bias, or incline him to do something he ought not to do, or to omit doing something he ought to do.

And the righteous God, to prevent all unjust Practices among Men, has strictly forbidden this Iniquity. In *Exod. xxiii. 8.* he has said, *Thou shalt take no Gift: For the Gift blindeth the Wise, and perverteth the Words of the Righteous.* It occasions Persons to form a wrong Judgment, or to give an unjust Sentence in a Cause, or to pervert, or misinterpret the Words of the Righteous, with whom they have to do.

In *Deut. xvi. 18, 19, 20.* the Holy God said to his People, *Judges and Officers shalt thou make thee in all thy Gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout all thy Tribes: And they shall judge the People with just Judgment. Thou shalt not wrest Judgment; thou shalt not respect Persons, neither take a Gift: For a Gift doth blind the Eyes of the Wise, and pervert the Words (or Matters, as the Expression is translated in the Margin) of the Righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* Which last Clause implies that by receiving Bribes, and not following that which is altogether just, they would provoke God by some Stroke of Judgment to cut short their Lives.

In *Prov. xvii. 23.* it is said, *A wicked Man taketh a Gift out of the Bosom (i. e. secretly) to pervert the Ways of Judgment,* signifying that he is a wicked Man indeed that receiveth a Bribe.

Thus wicked were *Joel*, and *Abiah*, the Sons of *Samuel*, whom he made *Judges over Israel*, they turned aside after *Lucie*, and took *Bribes*, and perverted Judgment, see 1 Sam. viii. 1, 2, 3.

And his Wickedness became general in the Days of the Prophet *Isaiah*, see *Isa.* i. 23, 24. where it is written, *Every one loveth Gifts, and followeth after Rewards: they judge not the Fatherless, neither doth the Cause of the Widow come unto them. Therefore, thus saith the LORD, the LORD of Hosts, the mighty one of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine Adversaries, and avenge me of mine Enemies.*

This Declaration signifies, that such Sinners are Enemies to God, and that he will avenge himself of them; and that they have Reason to fear a Destruction from the Almighty, when he visits a Nation for Sin.

But gracious Promises are made to the Righteous, that shaketh his Hands from holding of Bribes, for it is said, *He shall dwell on high: His Place of Defence, shall be the Munition of Rocks, Bread shall be given him, his Waters shall be pure, Isa.* xxxiii. 15, 16. which Declarations import that altho' Persons guilty of *Bribery* are obnoxious to the Miseries of a Day of God's Visitation for Sin, yet that the Righteous, who abhor the taking of Bribes, may hope for the divine Protection, and be provided for, and comforted in Times of publick Calamities.

Many Sins bring Guilt only on single Persons, but a BRIBE is an accursed Thing, which pollutes two Persons, and renders them both guilty before God, and obnoxious to his Wrath, viz. the Giver and the Receiver of it, and the Nature of this Iniquity ought to be known to all Men, and abhorred by all Men. And the Action of the Giver, and the Action of the Receiver as to its Signification deserves serious Notice,

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The Intention of a BRIBE is to prevail with the Receiver of it, to do something in itself sinful, as for a Judge to pass an unrighteous Judgment on a Cause, or else to do something, which the Receiver apprehended to be sinful, and therefore was unlawful for him to do.

In both these Cases the *Giver* endeavours to corrupt the Receiver, and engage him to sin against the holy God, to wound his own Soul, and expose himself to eternal Damnation; a dreadful Crime! vile in its Nature, and destructive in its Consequences, both to him that gives, and him that takes the Bribe. A sad Matter to be considered by the Guilty; beside the Injury which may be brought on others by Means of a prevailing Bribe.

The Action of the Giver signifies that he is a Man of corrupt Principles, that he fears not God, has no Regard to his Glory, and the Pleasing him, nor to the Welfare and Salvation of the Soul of the Person whom he bribes; it signifies that he joins his Endeavours with the Devil's to ruin for ever the Person whom he has corrupted.

And the Action of the *Receiver* signifies, that he is destitute of a right, and good Principle, that he has yielded to, and been overcome by the Temptation, and that he has sold the Favour of God, and his Soul, and Salvation for the Price of the Bribe he has received.

These Remarks have a like Foundation when a Bribe is given to prevail with any one not to do a Thing which the Law of God has made his Duty, or which he apprehends that God requires of him.

Both the Givers, and Receivers of Bribes, are Men of very corrupt Minds; and without sincere Repentance, and a thorough Reformation, they will never escape the Damnation of Hell, though they should be suffered to escape Punishment in this World.

These

These Things deserve the serious Consideration both of those, who at *Elections of Members to serve in Parliament*, give Bribes to engage Votes, and of those who receive them.

XIV. Persons who bear false Witness against others are another Sort of Sinners who have just Reason to fear Punishment when God visits a Nation for Sin.

These are Transgressors of the *ninth* Commandment, which says, *Thou shalt not bear false Witness against thy Neighbour*, Exod. xx. 16:

The Prohibition is not limited to the bearing false Witness against others on Trials in Courts of Judicature, altho' that is a most aggravated Kind of false Witness-Bearing, because of the Oath taken by Witnesses, wherein they appeal to God for the Truth of what they say falsely. But a Man's Reputation, and Livelihood may be ruin'd by false Witnesses that are never called before Magistrates.

A Man bears false Witness against his Neighbour, when he speaks that of another, which he knows to be false; whether it be in a Way of Affirmation, or Negation; whether he affirms of another that he spoke such Words, or did such Things, which he knows he did not; or denies his having spoken Words, which himself heard, or his doing Things which to his Knowledge the other really did.

All false Witnesses are Liars, and all Liars *shall have their Part in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone*, as it is said in Rev. xxi. 8.

Wherefore (saith St. Paul) *putting away Lying, speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour: For we are Members one of another*, Ephes. iv. 25.

A faithful Witness will not lie: But a false Witness will utter Lies, it is said Prov. xiv. 5. and Verse 25. *a true Witness delivereth Souls, but a deceitful Witness speaketh Lies.*

In *Prov. xix. 15.* it is declared, *He that justifieth the Wicked, and he that condemneth the Just, even they both are Abomination to the LORD.*

The supreme Lawgiver says, *Thou shalt not raise a false Report: Put not thine Hand with the Wicked to be an unrighteous Witness, Exod. xxiii. 1.*

And in *Prov. xix. 5.* it is declared that, *A false Witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh Lies shall not escape.* This Declaration shews, that these Sinners have Reason to expect Punishment in the Day of the LORD's Visitation for Sin.

The speaking falsely of others is a pernicious Practice; and the doing so as Witnesses in Courts of Judicature has brought innocent Persons to suffer Death for Crimes they never committed, and others to loose their Estates, which were their just Property, or to loose their good Reputation, a Blessing more valuable than Life.

They who are guilty of this cruel Iniquity do not deal towards others, as they would have others to deal with them.

They imitate their Father the Devil, who is the *Accuser of the Brethren*, see *Rev. xii. 9, 10.*

And altho' they may for a while escape Punishment, the Day is coming when the righteous God will take Vengeance on them, when they shall neither be able to escape, nor able to bear his Wrath.

XV. COVETOUS Persons, are another Sort of Sinners marked by divine Threatnings for suffering Punishment in the Day of the LORD's Visitation for Sin.

These are Transgressors of the *tenth Commandment*, which says, *Thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's House, thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's Wife, nor his Man-servant, nor his Maid-servant, nor his Ox, nor his Ass, nor any Thing that is thy Neighbours,* *Exod. xx. 19.*

This

This Law shews that it is sinful to desire any Thing that is another's Property, and appropriated to his own Use; because the Things of another, which he trades in, and has a Right to sell, and which we have Occasion for, we may desire, and may purchase; but appropriated Things we must not desire, or covet.

A strong Desire, or Coveting another Man's House, or Land, has prevailed with some to murder the rightful Possessor, as was the Case when *Abab* coveted *Naboth's* Vineyard, 1 *Kings* xxi. or to use other unjust Methods to get the Possession of it.

Thus coveting another Man's Wife, has been followed with Adultery, and Murder; of which *David* was a sad Instance.

And the coveting the Servants of others, has influenced some to use indirect, or dishonest Means to prevail with them to leave their Masters.

And the coveting of Money has led many to rob, steal, and commit Murder. *So are the Ways of every one that is greedy of Gain: Which taketh away the Life of the Owners thereof,* Prov. i. 19.

The *tenth* Commandment must be understood to forbid all inordinate, or too strong Desires after worldly Things, or too much Love to Money: Because such Coveting is not only inconsistent with the Love we owe to God, and to our Neighbour, but leads on to many other Sins.

For (as *St. Paul* says) *the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil: Which while some covet after, they have erred from the Faith, and pierced themselves through with many Sorrows,* 1 *Tim.* vi. 10.

Here I would observe that a Man's Desire of Money, or other worldly Things is certainly too strong, or is a sinful Coveting, when for obtaining them, he will use unlawful Means, or neglect some Duty God requires of him; and likewise, when, for the Sake of increasing his Riches, he will withhold

to himself what God would have him to distribute for the Use and Benefit of others.

Thus, if a Man for Lucre Sake will be guilty of Extortion, he is a covetous Man; or if instead of performing the religious Duties of the Sabbath, he will buy, or sell on that holy Day, or if on other Days he will be so eager in his Pursuits after earthly Riches, as not to allow Time for the Worship of God in his Family, and Closet, he is a covetous Man: And likewise if he will not expend in the Maintenance of his Family, and Education of his Children, so much as according to his Rank in the World, and his Riches, ought to be expended, he is a covetous Man; and if he will not distribute in Acts of Charity, according to his Abilities, and the Occasions, which call for his Assistance, he may justly be thought a covetous Man.

And such covetous Persons certainly do love their Money, more than they love their God; for they who do not desire, and endeavour to please God, cannot be truly said to love him; and of those, who wilfully sin against God in their way of getting, or of keeping Money, it cannot be justly said they desire, and endeavour to please him.

The covetous, the Lord abhorreth, Psal. x. 3.

In *Prov. xxviii. 16.* it is said, *He that hateth Covetousness shall prolong his Days*, which implies that he who loveth Covetousness, is like to shorten his Days.

In *Isa. lvii. 17.* The LORD said of his People, *For the Iniquity of his Covetousness was I wroth, and smote him.* Hence it is very evident, that in Ages past, God inflicted destroying Judgments on his People for their Covetousness. And therefore covetous Persons have Reason to be afraid of his Judgments in the Day that he visits a Land for Sin.

It was a sad Complaint which God made of his People in *Ezek. xxiii. 31.* where he says to the Pro-

phet concerning them, *They come unto thee, as the People cometh, and they sit before thee as my People, and they hear thy Words, but they will not do them: for their Heart goeth after their Covetousness.* That is, altho' they profess Love, and Obedience to God, and attend the solemn Assemblies to hear the Words of the Lord delivered by his Prophet, yet they will not do them; their strongest, and prevailing Affections, being after Riches and other worldly Things, the Objects of their Covetousness.

Their Riches, and other earthly Things, are the *Idols* of their Hearts: therefore, Covetousness is declared to be *Idolatry* in *Col. iii. 5.* where Christians are commanded to *mortify — inordinate Affections, evil Concupiscence, and Covetousness, which is Idolatry.*

In *Ephes. v. 5.* it is declared, *That no Whoremonger, nor unclean Person, nor covetous Man, who is an Idolater, hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God.*

It appears from this *Declaration*, that it is decreed by the righteous Governour of the World, that *covetous* Persons shall not be admitted to partake of the Joys, and Happiness of the Kingdom of Christ, and of God: And this implies that they will be sent into endless Miseries in the next World, and that they are liable to destroying Judgments in this, when God proceeds in visiting a Nation for Sin.

The Covetous, instead of looking to, and relying on the Lord, place a Confidence in their Wealth. *The rich Man's Wealth, is his strong City, and as an high Wall in his own Conceit;* as it is said in *Prov. xviii. 11.* But let such know, and consider those *Declarations* recorded in *Prov. xi. 4.* viz. *Riches profit not in the Day of Wrath;* and Verse 28. *He that trusteth in Riches shall fall.*

Thus saith the LORD — Let not the rich Man glory in his Riches, Jer. ix. 23.

In *Jer. xv. 13.* God says to the Wicked among his People, *Thy Substance, and thy Treasures will I give to the Spoil without Price, and that for all thy Sins, even in all thy Borders, Jer. xv. 13.* See also *Jer. xvii. 3.*

These *Declarations* plainly shew that the Covetous, and they who will go on in disobeying the Commandments of the Lord, have Reason to be afraid, when he is risen out of his Place to punish wicked Nations.

I have now considered the principal Sorts of Persons, Transgressors of one or other of the *ten* Commandments, against whom the holy God has denounced his awful Threatnings.

A righteous Nation, a holy City, whose Inhabitants know, and love, and serve the Lord, and make it their Practice to obey all his Precepts, have no Cause to be afraid, but abundant Ground for Comfort, and Joy on the Account of the manifold Promises of Blessings in this World, and of everlasting Felicity in the next, which are made to the Righteous.

But if the Inhabitants of a City, or Country, have revolted from God, if the Generality of them have cast off the Fear of the Almighty, and have long been regardless of his Authority, and Laws, and have gone on stubbornly in wicked Ways, and remain incorrigible, notwithstanding the Obligations of multiplied Blessings, notwithstanding the Patience, and long Forbearance of God, notwithstanding the divers Threatnings, and the Feeling of lesser Judgments, they have then the strongest Reasons to expect that the righteous God will proceed in visiting them for Sin, and pour out the Vials of his Wrath upon them.

I shall now conclude these Papers with an Address to the Inhabitants of *London, Westminster,* and all the other Parts of *Great-Britain.*

I need not tell you that Infidelity, and Profaneness, that a Contempt, and Derision of the divine Providence, and the holy Scriptures, are crying Sins among us; nor that keeping holy the Sabbath-Day, and a due Attendance on the publick Worship of God are generally neglected; nor that our Cities and Country have long been polluted with all Sorts of Immoralities; neither need I say to you that the holy God has shewn himself angry with us, by a Series of awful Judgments, tho' some of them thro' his abundant Mercy have been taken away.

And surely I need not say to you that Iniquities still abound among us, that Provocations of almighty Wrath are still committed, and that there appears very little of Reformation; neither need I add that the Tokens of God's Anger do still subsist.

The great God has given us Warning after Warning, and Stroke after Stroke, and then ceased awhile, and waited to see whether we will consider our evil Ways, and repent of our Sins, and return unto him; he has waited, and still waits that he may be gracious to us; that he may, consistent with the Honour of his Government, with the Glory of his Name, forgive our Sins, and be reconciled unto us, and bless us. But the Reconciliation is not yet brought about; No, for we stubbornly persist in our Rebellion against him: And it is too evident to be denied that his Hand is still stretched out against us.

Was it not that holy God who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity without Abhorrence, and without being incensed against the wilful Transgressors of his Laws? Was it not he who permitted our Enemies to draw the Sword, and from a Number, small, at first, to increase into a Multitude, and to march thro' the Heart of our Country, and to approach

proach so near this our Metropolis, as to fill the Minds of all true Protestants, and faithful Subjects of our gracious Sovereign with a Dread of the Consequences, if he had not by his Influence turned them back by the Way that they came, and afterwards intirely subdued them? Was it not he, who sent the *mortal Sickness* among our Cattle? and who has been thro' a Course of several Years destroying them! and shewing that he can as easily destroy our Persons! and does he not awfully proceed, in the Way of his Anger, by smiting the Beasts of the Field still with Sickness, and Death, in divers Parts of the Country?

Pray consider, That *Destruction of Cattle* is one of God's threatned Judgments; and that this still subsists in the Land; and that Earthquakes are another Sort of them, very terrible: And let us keep in Remembrance how the Almighty has once and again very lately made the Earth to tremble under these great Cities; and has violently shaken the Houses of the Inhabitants over them; and that the divine Power might either have caused the Earth to open and swallow up the Buildings, and all the living Creatures that are upon it, or else without the Opening of the Earth might have shattered, and thrown down even the strongest Edifices, and have crushed to Death those who dwell in them; and who can tell what, or how many of his other Threatnings will be executed among us, or how soon!

I entreat you to read again, and again, and revolve in your Minds what has been offered to your Thoughts in the foregoing Papers.

Let every one faithfully examine himself, and consider whether he is not of one or other of the SORTS of Persons whom God has threatened, not only with everlasting Torments in the future State, but with Miseries, with Distress, and Destruction even in this World, when he visits Cities, and Nations for their Sins,

If

If you compare your Lives with the holy Laws of God, your Consciences will tell you, whether you are among the miserable Objects of the divine Threatnings.

And is this your Case! I must then tell you, that you are under a dreadful Sentence of Condemnation.

For hitherto you have not repented of your Sins, nor believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

In *John* iii. 18, 19. it is thus declared, *viz.* *He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darknes rather than Light, because their Deeds were evil.*

O how deplorable is your Condition! in being Enemies to God by your wicked Works, in being the Servants of Sin, and Satan? How deplorable, I say, is your Condition, whatever be your worldly Honours, Riches, and Possessions, or Eminency for Learning! *Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves Servants to obey, his Servants ye are, to whom ye obey, whether of Sin unto Death, or of Obedience unto Righteousness!* Rom. vi. 16.

How lamentable is your Case in your being Objects of the divine Anger! For *God is angry with the Wicked every Day*, (*Psal.* vii. 11.) He is so continually; and how wretched are you, in your being obnoxious to all the Miseries threatned to be inflicted in this Life! and in being liable to a speedy Death, and to the Pains of Hell for ever!

And what Comfort, what Peace can you have in your present State? *There is no Peace, saith my God, to the Wicked*, *Isai.* lvii. 21.

What have you to yield unto your Souls a rational, a sincere Consolation! Have you stately Houses, rich Furniture, large Estates, and great Honours? yet these do not satisfy you.

You

You seek after Pleasure, and Joy in sensual Entertainments; your Ears are delighted with exquisite Musick; your Eyes are pleased with a vast Variety of the agreeable Objects of Sight! Numberless are the Recreations, and Amusements, which human Invention has contrived to take up your Time.

But these Things do not satisfy you! you are at great Expences, and often take great Pains; you fatigue your Bodies, and prejudice your Health in Pursuits of Objects, to gratify one or other of your bodily Senses.

And in the midst of your highest Enjoyments, you still find something wanting to give your Minds satisfying Joy! you have not yet found Rest for your Souls!

And all the while that you have an Affluence of worldly Things, you are wretched Creatures. The Curse of God is upon you! you are liable to a Variety of Distempers, to the Gout, to the Stone, and to a thousand other bodily Diseases, to Melancholy, to Despair; and you are obnoxious to Enemies, to Shame, and to a Diversity of Afflictions, which you cannot comprehend, and liable to everlasting Torment in the next World.

But I may add, that altho' your present Condition is bad beyond Conception, yet you may be delivered from it! There is a sure Way to Safety, Comfort, and Happiness, both in this World, and in that to which you are going. Read again, and ponder in your Thoughts what has been proposed to your Consideration in my former Letter, Pag. 28, 29, &c. for the Encouragement of your Hope and Joy in following the Directions of the Gospel.

Repent of your Sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and all your Iniquities will be forgiven you. Our good God, tho' you have provoked him Times and Ways without Number, will then be reconciled to you; and your eternal Salvation, and
Happiness

Happiness through the crucified, the risen, the exalted and blessed JESUS will be sure.

O become sincere Disciples of the crucified, and risen Jesus! take him for your Saviour, and Prince! for your Master, and Lord! and trust in him, and in him alone, for a compleat Salvation from all your Sins, as well as from the everlasting Punishment due unto you for them! Trust in him alone for Holiness, and Happiness; for Grace to encline, and enable you to lead holy Lives according to the Will of God.

Then will you find those rational Pleasures, those sincere Comforts, and that solid Peace and Rest for your Souls, which you never knew before! then will you know the Difference between the Pleasures of Sin, and the Consolations which the Gospel administers to penitent, and believing Sinners! then you will despise, and abhor your former carnal, and sensual Delights, and find that Satisfaction in the Service, and Enjoyment of God, which you would not part with for ten thousand Worlds. This has been the Experience of those who formerly practised the like Sins, and pursued and enjoyed the same sensual Pleasures as yourselves, but since have been truly converted, and have accepted of Christ, and joined themselves to the Lord in his gracious Covenant, and walk closely with him in the Way of Holiness, and known by Experience that the Pleasures of a religious holy Life, are inexpressibly greater than those of Sin.

And O that it may please the God of all Grace, by the mighty working of his holy Spirit, to put it into your Hearts sincerely thus to express yourselves unto him, *viz.*

“ O holy, and most merciful God! I am now
 “ convinced that I have long been a vile, sinful,
 “ guilty, and a rebellious Creature against Thee!
 “ convinced that there is a sinful, and dreadful De-
 “ pravity

“ pravity in my Nature, and a strong and prevail-
 “ ing Bias on my Will and Affections to Things
 “ contrary to thy Laws! and that I have been eagerly
 “ pursuing Objects, unbecoming the Desires, which
 “ I ought to cherish! I am now convinced that I
 “ want a Saviour! and that I must be miserable for
 “ ever without one!

“ I am now convinced that thy only begotten,
 “ and well-beloved Son, the blessed Jesus, is the
 “ Saviour, and I thankfully accept of him as my
 “ only Redeemer! as my great Prophet, Priest,
 “ and King!

“ Faith is thy Gift! Lord, bestow this heavenly
 “ Gift on me in a large Measure! and quicken
 “ me by thy Spirit, who am naturally dead in Tres-
 “ passes, and Sins!

“ O make me a new Creature in Christ Jesus!
 “ Make the old Things to pass away, and all
 “ Things to *become new* * and holy in me!

“ I now renounce all my Sins! I give up myself
 “ unto Thee, to be thine in the everlasting Cove-
 “ nant; and to be instructed, inclined, and enabled
 “ always to live according to the Engagements of
 “ it.

“ O pardon all my Sins! be Thou my reconciled
 “ God, my Lord, my Lawgiver, and my Portion,
 “ now henceforth, and for ever! Amen, for the
 “ Sake of Christ Jesus my Advocate, and Redeemer.
 “ Amen.”

Thus be you prevailed with to accept of Christ,
 and devote yourselves to God; and testify the Sincerity
 of your Faith in Christ, and the Uprightness of
 your Hearts, by a constant Attendance on the pub-
 lick Worship of God, and a conscientious Obedience
 to all his Commandments.

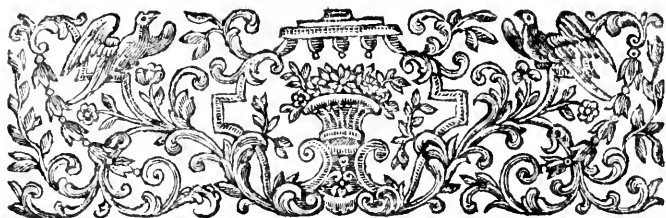
* 2 Cor. v. 17.

And let not the Scoffs and Derisions of any of your Acquaintance make you ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, who suffered Death, that you might obtain Forgiveness, and everlasting Life! nor ashamed of observing his Sabbaths, and Ordinances, nor of owning his Cause, and his People.

Let the Operations of the Divine Providence be compared with the *Declarations* of God recorded in his Word, and they are a perpetual Evidence of the Divine Authority of the sacred Scriptures, and of the Truth of the Gospel! An Evidence of the Being, Wisdom, Power, Goodness, and Righteousness of God, and of the Unreasonableness of Atheism, and Infidelity, and indeed of all Irreligion.

Many other Things I might fitly propose to the Consideration of the Inhabitants of *Great Britain*, who have long been under the Threatnings of the Word and Providence of God; but I will only add, that God, in the Time of his awful Visitation of Cities and Countries for Sin, will make a Difference in his Dealings with the Righteous, and the Wicked. See *Isa.* iii. 10, 11. *Say ye to the Righteous that it shall be well with him: For they shall eat the Fruit of their Doings. Wo unto the Wicked, it shall be ill with him: For the Reward of his Hands shall be given him.*

The E N D!



LETTER III.

Containing the Introduction, with some Thoughts of the Importance of continuing the Use of the Expressions in the Sacred Scriptures among Christians, and a Summary of the Evidences of the Truth of the Gospel for the Conviction of such as are doubting of it; and the Confirmation of the Faith of Serious Christians; with all shewing the sad State of Infidels, who have the Means of knowing the Truth.

IN the foregoing Letters I gave a Summary of the Divine Laws, chiefly in the Order of the Ten Commandments, and considered the Predictions relative to those Persons, who live in wilful Disobedience to any of them; I have shewed that the Holy God, who has denounced everlasting Punishments, and Torments on them in the next World, has likewise threatned them with horrible Punishments, and Miseries in this.

I have shewed that the Righteous God will visit Cities, and Countries with his great Plagues, if the Wicked Inhabitants of them will not be reformed, either by his Methods of Mercy, or by his lesser Judgments.

B

These

These Things I have given an Account of ; that so by the Consideration of them some Persons may be brought to Repentance towards God and Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is both able, and willing to save, even the Chief of Sinners.

The terrible Predictions of inexpressible Miseries to be inflicted on incorrigible Sinners, collected in the foregoing Papers, may well fill the Minds of impenitent, stubborn Persons with Amazement and Horror. And especially since the Righteous God is risen out of his Place to punish the Inhabitants of the World for their Iniquities ; since by his just Providence thro' the Course of several late Years, He has been bringing upon many Cities and Countries the Miseries of War, or of Pestilence, or of Famine ; ruining Thousands after Thousands, both Rich and Poor, and destroying the Lives of Multitudes after Multitudes : I say since these Events, there is Reason for wilful Sinners to be afraid.

And those Cities and Nations, which have hitherto been preserved in Health, Tranquility and Plenty, have no Ground to imagine they shall always escape unpunished ; but they have Reason to fear suffering the like Judgments except they repent.

God indeed delights not in the Miseries of his disobedient Servants : *Say to them, as I live saith the LORD GOD I have no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his Way, and live.* (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) Joyful Tidings to all Sorts of Sinners ! God in his infinite Mercy has provided a mighty Saviour, his only begotten and well beloved SON ; and in his Gospel has revealed the Way, by which the most wretched Transgressors may obtain a sure Interest in him, and Salvation by him.

This

This sure Way, I have likewise considered in the former Letters, that so none may Despair, but all may be prevailed with by the Loving-kindness of the Lord; to renounce their Sins, and with Joy accept of Christ, and trust in him, to save them from their Sins, and from the dreadful Wrath, which is coming on the Children of Disobedience.

I shall in the following Papers consider those PREDICTIONS of Blessings, which may administer Comfort to the Minds of serious Christians at all Times; and particularly when God is visiting the Inhabitants of any City, or Country, for their Iniquities.

I may observe that in all Ages, and in every Town and Nation; there are in God's Account, but two Sorts of People; viz. the *Righteous*, and the *Wicked*: Into these general Classes they are distributed, in Gen. xviii. 23, 25.

The Expression the *Righteous* comprehends all those, who did know, love, and serve God, all who believed his Word, and whose Course of Life was a Practice of all Duties towards God and Man, required by the Divine Laws; and the Expression the *Wicked* includes all those, who would not practice the Duties they owe to God and Man, and did not believe his Word.

The Expressions still retain the same Significations. And at the End of the World people will be divided only into two Sorts. *When the Son of Man shall come in his Glory, and all the Holy Angels with him, then shall he sit upon the Throne of his Glory, and before him shall be gathered all Nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a Shepherd divideth the Sheep from the Goats; and he shall set the Sheep on his right Hand, and the Goats on his left.* (Matt. xxv. 31, 32, 33.) By the Metaphor of *Sheep* are meant the faithful Servants of God, the true Disciples of Christ; and by that of *Goats*

are signified all the Disobedient and Impenitent, who would not believe, and obey the Gospel.

Thus from the Beginning of the World to the End of it, there are only two Sorts of People.

After Christ (the promised Messiah) came into the World, and his Gospel was preached! they who were convinced by it, and believed on the Holy Jesus, and accepted of him as their Saviour and Prince, were called Believers.

By this Title they were denoted in *Acts* v. 14. Where it is said, *and Believers were the more added to the Lord, Multitudes both of Men and Women.*

Thus also in *1 Tim.* iv. 12. where the Apostle says to him, *Be thou an Example of the Believers.*

And the Believers were called Christians, first at Antioch. (*Acts* xi. 26.) and from that Time they who professed the Gospel were denominated by the same Name. But it must be said that not all, who call themselves Christians are such in Truth.

They who live in wilful Disobedience to the Rules of his Gospel are not Christ's Disciples indeed.

The Apostle James says, *Even so Faith, if it hath not Works, is dead;* (*James* ii. 17.) that is, it is as useless as a Body without Life.

No Sorts of wilful Sinners are serious Christians; *Know ye not that the Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Abusers of themselves with Man-kind, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners shall inherit the Kingdom of God.* (*1 Cor.* vi. 9, 10.) Therefore none of those sorts of People are to be reckoned serious Christians.

But that we may better understand, who are truly Religious or sincere Christians, to whom the Predictions of Blessings do belong, Blessings intended

intended for their Happiness, Comfort and Joy; I shall consider some of the Characters by which they are described, or distinguished from others in the Holy Scriptures; and likewise some of the Blessings promised to them.

These Things I propose to give an Account of, *not in the Words, which Man's Wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth: Comparing Spiritual Things with Spiritual.* (1 Cor. ii. 13.) Doubtless God knows what Words and Expressions are fittest to convey to our Minds the Ideas, and Thoughts he would have us to entertain.

And therefore we are not to lay them aside in Speaking of our Spiritual Concerns, and of the Doctrines he has revealed, or of the Ordinances, and Laws he has enjoined us.

It is a Duty, and a very weighty Duty, to retain and use the Language of the Holy Scriptures; for the Laying aside the Use of the Words, and Expressions of God, which we find in his Sacred Revelation contained in our Bible, is a Throwing into Oblivion, and a Losing those important Thoughts and Ideas, which they describe and express; and indeed it is Rejecting so much of the Gospel as is contained in them.

It introduces different Ideas and Notions; and so far another Religion, or Gospel; although they, who do so, call themselves Christians.

Can I with Reason believe that Man to have been born and lived in England, who neither uses, nor understands the English Language? And have I more Reason to think that Man a real Christian, who neither uses, nor understands the Language of the Gospel, those Words which the Holy Ghost teacheth?

It is a bold Undertaking in any Person to alter the Language of the Holy Spirit, or to bring into Disuse those Words and Phrases by which he
expresses

expresses the Doctrines of the Gospel, and the Things which concern our Salvation.

In *Rev.* xxii. 18, 19. it is said, *If any Man shall add unto these Things, God shall add to him the Plagues that are written in this Book. And if any Man shall take away from the Words of the Book of this Prophecy, God shall take away his Part out of the Book of Life.*

It is a heinous Sin to add any Thing unto, or to take away from the Words of any other Book of the Holy Scriptures.

In *Prov.* xxx. 5, 6. it is said, *Every Word of God is pure, he is a Shield unto them that put their Trust in him: Add thou not unto his Words, lest he reprove thee and thou be found a Liar.*

In *Deut.* iv. 2. it is written, *Ye shall not add unto the Word which I command you, neither shall you diminish ought from it.*

My Soul trembles at the Thoughts of Laying aside the Language of the sacred Scriptures, and substituting other Expressions in the Stead of it.

St. Paul says, *But though we, or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel (that is, other Doctrines about Christ and Salvation by him,) than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.* See *Gal.* i. 8, 9, 10.

By using the Expressions of the Sacred Scriptures, the Words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, I do not mean that we must not use any others; for the Use of other Words is very needful in preaching the Gospel, and expounding the Scriptures, and in catechising and instructing Children and Youth, and in discoursing on the several Parts of Divine Revelation.

But we must not disuse the Scripture Language, nor use Terms which convey Ideas, or Thoughts different from, and repugnant to it.

In every Language, into which the Holy Scriptures have been translated from the *Hebrew* and *Greek*, the Words are different as to the Letters, Syllables and Sound; but as the Words in the several Translations signify and express the same Thoughts, and Ideas, which are conveyed to the Mind by the Words in the Original Language, the Words in every Translation, may so far be esteemed the Words, which the Holy Ghost teacheth.

If what I have said concerning the Words of the Holy Ghost, and of the Importance of continuing the Use of them, be a Digression, it is a necessary One, and needs no Apology in this Age, wherein many are fallen into a Dislike and Disuse of them.

I shall now consider some Parts of the Holy Scriptures, by which it may be known who are real Christians, to whom the Predictions of Blessings do relate, and who may be much comforted by them.

The Character of real Christians in general, includes a *Believing those Things, which are written concerning Christ.*

The Apostle Paul in Defence of himself before Felix, says, *This I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call Heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers; believing all Things which are written in the Law, and the Prophets.* (Acts xxiv. 14.) That is, all the Things written concerning Christ, as appears from the Context; and for the same Reasons we are to believe all Things that are written concerning Christ by the Apostles in the New Testament.

I shall therefore mention some of those Things which are written in the Sacred Scriptures concerning *Christ*, and which we are to believe.

On the Sacred Predictions.

It is plainly evident from what is written in the Holy Scriptures, that the promised Messiah, (the Redeemer of Israel, and the Saviour of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews,) was a Person of transcendent Excellency, Majesty, Authority, Power and Goodness.

It was revealed that he should be a *Man*; that is, that he should have an human Nature, consisting of an human Soul, and Body. This appears from its being declared, *That he should be a Child, born of a Virgin.* (Isa. vii. 14.)

For every Child, every Son that is born of a Woman hath an human Soul, and an human Body.

And of the Virgin Mary it is said, that *She was found with Child of the Holy Ghost.* (Matt. i. 18.) *And when she brought forth her first born Son, his Name was called Jesus,* according to the Appointment of God his Father. (ver. 25.) and in (1 Tim. ii. 5.) he is called *The Man Christ Jesus.*

But it is also revealed that the Messiah, our blessed Redeemer is God, as well as Man: For those Things are affirmed of him, which cannot be applied to any meer Creature.

It is testified that when the Messiah should come, he should be *Immanuel*, that is, *God with us.* (Isa. vii. 14.) and afterwards, that *He is the Mighty God.* (Isa. ix. 6.)

And in (John i. 1, 3.) it is revealed that, *It the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All Things were made by him, and without him was not any Thing made that was made.*

And in (ver. 14.) it is said, *And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us.*

In (John iii. 13.) the blessed Jesus himself says, *No Man hath ascended up to Heaven, but he that came*

came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven.

This shews that the Son of Man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, had another Nature besides the Human; a *Nature* Omnipresent, which was in Heaven, at the same Time it was present with him, while he was on Earth, talking with Nicodemus.

Hereby Christ made it known that his human Nature was united to the Divine; and that he is both God, and Man, in one Person, and may well be called *Wonderful*.

Of this glorious Person, the Prophet (in Isa. ix. 6, 7.) said, *Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the Government shall be upon his Shoulders, and his Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the Increase of his Government, (which implies it would be small at first) and Peace, there shall be no End. Upon the Throne of David, and upon his Kingdoms, to order and to establish it with Judgment, and with Justice, from henceforth even for ever: The Zcal of the LORD of Hosts will perform this.*

And (in Isa. xlix. 5, 6.) *Now saith the Lord; (that is, to his promised Messiah) I will also give thee for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my Salvation to the Ends of the Earth.*

He is declared to be *A Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of his People Israel.* (Luke ii. 32.)

He is called *The Desire of all Nations.* (Hag. ii. 7.)

And all Nations ought to desire him, on the Account of his Divine Excellencies; his Majesty, and Power, and Honour, and Glory; and on the Account of his redeeming Love; his great Compassion for all Sorts of People, in a State of Sin

and Misery; and undertaking to procure a great Salvation, not for the Jews only, but for all Nations.

In regard to Authority, Wisdom, Power, Justice and Goodness, and likewise in Respect to his Dominion, the Extent, and Duration of it, the greatest Potentates on Earth are as nothing.

Yet how did this most glorious Person, whom the Holy Angels worship and adore, how did he enter into this World?

Not with Pomp, and Grandeur; no, he was born of a Virgin in mean Circumstances, tho' descended from David the King; he was born of one destitute of the Conveniences common to Women in her Condition. And altho he was born King of the Jews, he had no Palace for the Place of his Birth, but his first Accommodations were in a Stable, and to be laid in a Manger.

Behold, O my Soul, the Beginning of thy Saviour's Life! The Beginning of a Life of deep Humiliation and Suffering! Surely he was a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief, from his Birth to his Death.

And why was all this, but out of Love and Pity to me and other Sinners like myself? And shall I not love him, who so greatly humbled himself that I might be delivered from my natural State of Sin and Misery, and be exalted into a State of Holiness and Happiness?

I pray that I may be enabled always, to love him in Sincerity.

In Isa. liii. 2. the Prophet speaking what would be the Thoughts of the Jews, when the Messiah should appear, says, *He has no Form nor Comeliness: And when we shall see him, there is no Beauty that we should desire him.* That is, none that was agreeable to the carnal Expectations and Wishes of the Jews.

The Jews therefore despised and rejected him, because he came into the World in a mean, and low Condition, destitute of the Accommodations of the Attendants, and of the Honours, which are common to Emperors and Kings.

But did not the great God bear witness that this Jesus of Nazareth was his SON, and the very Messiah spoken of by all the Prophets, notwithstanding his Poverty, and mean Appearance among the Jews?

Did not the Angel of the Lord appear unto Joseph in a Dream, saying, *Joseph, thou Son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy Wife: For that, which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his Name JESUS: For he shall save his People from their Sins?* (Matt. i. 20, 21.)

And when Christ was born, did not the Almighty God make known this grand Event to certain wise Men in the East, and reveal to them that this Child was born King of the Jews? (Matt. ii. 1, 2.) and did he not incline them to take a long Journey to visit, and bring Presents, and pay their Homage to him? And did he not by a miraculous Star guide them, and made it pass before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was? (Matt. ii. 9.)

When the Virgin Mary brought forth her first born Son (in Bethlehem) and wrapped him in Swadling Cloths, and laid him in a Manger, because there was no Room for him in the Inn: (Luke ii. 7.) we read, *There were in the same Country Shepherds abiding in the Field, keeping Watch over their Flock by Night: And lo, the Angel of the Lord came upon them, and the Glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the Angel said unto them, fear not: For behold I bring you good Tidings of great*

Joy, which shall be (the Occasion of great Joy) to all People, for unto you (and to all People) is born this Day in (Bethlehem) the City of David a Saviour, which is Christ (or the Messiah) the Lord. And this shall be a Sign unto you; ye shall find the Babe wrapped in Swaddling Clothes, lying in a Manger.

Thus God sent an Angel to publish or proclaim to the Shepherds, that the *Messiah* was come; that the glorious Saviour was born in Bethlehem, Christ the Lord. (Luke ii. 8, &c.)

But God did not attest this grand Event, by one Angel only, No, *For suddenly there was with that Angel, a Multitude of the Heavenly Host, praising God (on this Account,) and saying: Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Goodwill towards Men. (ver. 13, 14.) And when the Angels were gone from them into Heaven, the Shepherds said one to another, let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this Thing, which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a Manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the Saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all they that heard it, wondered at those Things which were told them by the Shepherds.*

Thus God himself did bear Witness that Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary, *was his Son*, and the true *Messiah*, and thus in the most magnificent and glorious Manner, proclaimed his Birth to the World.

And as at his Birth, so through his Life, and at his Death, and after it did God bear witness to the Truth of his Gospel.

When the *Messiah* our great Redeemer was baptized, *the Heavens were opened unto him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a Dove and lighting*

lighting upon him; and lo, a Voice from Heaven, Saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.* (Mat. iii. 16, 17.)

When he was transfigured before his Disciples, (viz. Peter, James and John,) *while he yet spake, behold, a bright Cloud over shadowed them; behold, a Voice out of the Cloud* (that is the Voice of God,) *which said, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.* Matt. xvii. 5.

It may, and it ought to be observed, that our great Redeemer through the whole Course of his Life shewed a continual Disregard to the Honours, the Riches and Pleasures of this World, and wholly employed himself in preaching the Gospel, shewing the People the Way to be saved, and teaching them those Things they should know, and believe and practise. Daily proving his Mission from God, and confirming his Doctrine by numberless Miracles, casting out Devils, raising the Dead, and healing all Manner of Diseases.

And in his last Sufferings, when he was dying on the Cross as a Sacrifice for us, *Behold, the Vail of the Temple was rent in twain, from the Top to the Bottom, and the Earth did quake, and the Rocks rent, and the Graves were opened, and many Bodies of Saints, which slept arose, and came out of the Graves after his Resurrection, and went into the Holy City, and appeared* (not to a few but) *unto many.*

And when the Centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the Earthquake and those Things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. (Matt. xxvii. 31, &c.)

Well, after he was dead Joseph, a rich Man of Arimathea buried his Body, and laid it in his own new Tomb, which he had hewn out in the Rock, and rolled a great stone to the Door of the Sepulchre.

The Enemies of Christ remembered his Prediction of himself, viz. that he would rise again the
third

third Day, and intreated Pilate to command the Sepulchre to be made sure until the third Day, *And Pilate said unto them ye have a Watch, go your Way, make it as sure as you can, so they went and made the Sepulchre sure, sealing the Stone and setting a Watch.* (See ver. 63, &c.)

Vain Precautions! in *Matt. xxviii. 2, &c.* it is said, *Behold, there was a great Earthquake; for the Angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the Stone from the Door, and set upon it. His Countenance was like Lightning, and his Raiment white as Snow. And for Fear of him the Keepers did shake, and became as dead Men. And the Angel answered and said unto the Women (mentioned ver. 1.) Fear not ye, for I know, that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the Place where the Lord lay.* And after he was risen from the Dead, he often appeared unto his Disciples, and He did eat, and drink, and converse with them. It is said, *he shewed himself alive to his Apostles, by many infallible Proofs being seen of them forty Days, and speaking of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God* Acts i. 3.

When he left this World, and had taken Leave of his Disciples he did not go from them into a secret Place, and thence by himself alone ascend up into Heaven: No, but as there were many Witnesses of his Death, and of his Resurrection, so likewise of his Ascension into Heaven.

The History of the Holy Jesus written by *St. Luke* testifies, that *two of his Disciples, (Luke xxiv. 13.) went the same Day (in which our Lord rose from the Dead) to a Village called Emmaus, and that our Lord joined himself to their Company, (ver. 15.) and beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the Things concerning himself.* (ver. 17.)

That

That after Christ was gone from them, *they rose up the same Hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the Eleven (Apostles) and them that were with them.* (ver. 33.) That while this Company was together, *Jesus himself stood in the Midst of them, and discoursed with them.* (ver. 36.) &c. *And opened their Understanding that they might understand the Scriptures.* (ver. 45.) *And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lift up his Hands, and blessed them.* (ver. 50.) it is added, *And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven.* (ver. 51.) Whence it appears, that the Apostles, and those who were with them, were Eye-Witnesses of our Lord's Ascension into Heaven.

In *Acts*, i. 4, 11. we are informed, that ~~when~~ our blessed Lord being assembled together with them, that is with his Apostles and Disciples, after he had concluded his Discourses with them, *while they beheld, he was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight. And while they looked steadfastly towards Heaven, as he went up, behold two Men (that is two Angels in the Likeness of Men,) stood by them in White Apparel, which also said, ye Men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven; shall so come, in like Manner, as ye have seen him go into Heaven.*

After this Glorious Event of Christ's Ascension into Heaven, his Prediction, and Promise of the Holy Ghost was fulfilled to the Apostles, (whom he had chosen to be his Witnesses,) while they staid in Jerusalem to be qualified for, and to be enabled to fulfil their Ministry and Apostleship.

For when *they were all with one Accord in one Place, suddenly, there came a Sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind, and it filled all the House where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven Tongues, like as of Fire, and sat upon*

upon each of them. (that is on each of the Apostles,) And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance. Acts ii. 1, &c.

And many Signs and Wonders were done by the Apostles, (Acts ii. 43.) who wrought many Miracles in Confirmation of their Testimony, and Doctrine in the several Cities and Countries into which they went preaching the Gospel of Christ; Wherefore it is said, God also bearing them Witness both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will. Heb. ii. 4.

I have now given myself a Pleasure, and a Pleasure to my fellow-Christians, who shall read this summary Account of the Glories of the Messiah, our only Saviour; the Consideration of it, may confirm our Faith, establish our Hope in Him, and increase our Reverence of, and our Love to him.

The Great, and the Holy God, has demonstrated his Being, his Existence, and his infinite Perfections two ways, viz.

By his Works of Creation; the Heavens declare his Glory, and the Firmament, and the vast Variety of Creatures shew his handy Work, and all proclaim his infinite Wisdom and Power, and Goodness.

When I view the Heavens, and the Earth, the Sun, Moon and Stars, and the Manifold Kinds of Animals, and Vegetables, I conclude and I ought to conclude, (if I would reason rightly,) that there is a God, whose Wisdom contrived, and whose Power brought them into Existence.

And likewise by the Works of his Providence, he demonstrates the same; especially by his giving to us the Holy Scriptures, and the everlasting Gospel, God has manifested his Being, and his Glory.

The Doctrines, and Laws, of the Old Testament, and the Gospel revealed more clearly in the New, are ratified, or proved to be from God, by a wonderful Constructure of Predictions, and by the Accomplishment of them.

And likewise when I read the Holy Scriptures, and the Prophecies of the Events many Years, and some of them many Ages future, and how exactly the Things foretold have come to pass, I conclude that there is a God, and that our Bible contain his Word, or the Revelation of his Will, and that the Doctrines of both the Testaments are certainly true.

Because if there was not a Foreknowledge of future Events, there could be no Prophecies of them; if there was not a God who foreknew his own Acts, what himself would do, and what he would permit, or prevent, and whose Power over-rules all Creatures, and all their Actions, Predictions could not be fulfilled. But as we are certain that the Prophecies, recorded in the Holy Scriptures have very many of them been fulfilled, and that others are fulfilling, so we are certain that there is a God, and as certain that the Gospel is true.

And that in Christian Countries, Unbelievers, those Infidels have no Excuse.

How God will deal with the Heathens, with Nations that never heard the joyful Sound of the Gospel, we Christians know not; only we know that *The Judge of all the Earth will do right: And that in every Nation he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness is accepted with him.* (Acts x. 35.) ac

But as for those who live in a Country, where the Gospel is preached, and where the People have the Holy Scriptures, and may read them if

they will, we know how God will deal with them.

The Holy Jesus said to the Jews, *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your Sins.* (John viii. 24.) which proves that the Unbelievers, if they continue such, can never escape everlasting Destruction.

Unbelievers, reject Christ from being their King; they will not have this Man to reign over them: But that Time will surely come, when this King will appoint them to be destroyed. *But those mine Enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me.* Luke xix. 21.

Are there not Infidels in this Age, Persons who do not and will not believe that Jesus is the SON of God, and the promised Saviour? And may not those Predictions of his justly fill them with Dread? They may.

And so may those Predictions, recorded (2 Thes. i. 7, 8, 9.) where the Apostle foretells that *The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty ~~Angels~~, in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power.*

Angels

These Predictions may well excite in rational Minds the most amazing Fears, if they are guilty of disbelieving the Gospel of Christ; because their reasoning Faculty renders them capable of considering the Evidence of true Propositions, and thereby of receiving Conviction of the Truth of the Gospel.

And if they are not convinced of the most plain, and most important Truths, it is because they will not consider the Evidence of them.

If a Man at Noon Day, with a clear Sky, shall say the Sun does not shine, and that there is no such Thing as the Sun, he either is blind, or belies his Senses, and either he has no Reason, or knowingly contradicts it.

And thus if a Man shall say, the Gospel of Christ is not true, (since Christ by many infallible Proofs has established it,) he speaks and acts against Reason in rejecting it.

What the Holy Jesus said of the Jews, is applicable to these Unbelievers. In John xv. 24. the blessed Jesus said of them; *If I had not done among them the Works which none other Man did, they had not had Sin; but now have they both seen and hated me and my Father.* And it may be said of the Infidels (who have the Gospel among them, and will not believe it,) that they have Sin, and no Cloke for their Sin.

They shut their Eyes and will not see, but they shall see, and be ashamed, as it is said; Isa. xxvi. 17. and it may be very soon: For when Death comes, tho' it closes the Eyes of their Bodies, it will open the Eyes of their Minds: And then they will see that the Holy Scriptures are indeed the Word of God, and that the Gospel came from God, publishing and offering Salvation to all Sorts of Sinners, by Jesus Christ: Then they will see the Worth of their Souls, and the Excellency of the Happiness purchased by Christ, and offered to them, and refused by them.

O what Horror, what Distress filled the Mind of St. Paul, when Jesus of Nazareth appeared to him in the Way, as he went to Damascus, and when he found that just One, whom the Jews had crucified, both Lord and Christ!

But how much greater Horrors, and even a dreadful and irremovable Despair join'd with

them, will fill the Souls of the Infidels, as soon as they are taken from their Bodies, by an Angry and a Sin-revenging God !

These Infidels are more guilty, and their Guilt more aggravated than that of the Devils.

The Devils believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, and the Saviour of Men ; they believe all the Facts relating to him, mentioned in the Holy Scriptures.

But the Infidels deny them ; and their Guilt is the more heinous, as Christ came into the World on purpose not to save the Devils, but the sinful Children of Men. And as the whole Series of his Actions, were Acts of Pity, of Love manifested both to the Bodies and Souls of Men, as he came to purchase the Pardon of Sins, Peace with God, and everlasting Felicity for all that would become his Disciples.

O Merciful God, awaken the Consciences of those desperate Sinners ; bring them to believe that Faith which they have hitherto been labouring to destroy ! Bring them to read, and consider what the blessed Jesus says, (in *Matt. x. 32, 33.*) *whosoever therefore shall confess me before Men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in Heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before Men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.*

These Words should engage us not only to believe in Christ, but readily to own and acknowledge him to be our Redeemer, in whom we trust for Salvation, and they should restrain us from denying him.

In *Mark viii. 36, 37, 38.* Christ says, *For what shall it profit a Man, if he gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? or what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul? Whoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my Words* (which

(which include his Doctrines and Laws,) *in this adulterous, and Sinful Generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the Holy Angels.*

These Sayings of Christ import not only that the Unbelievers, but also that those Professors of his Gospel, who to avoid Sufferings, or to gain any Worldly Advantage, shall either deny Christ, or be ashamed of him, or his Words and Doctrines, are appointed to inexpressible and everlasting Punishments, they lose their own Souls, and all the Happiness purchased by Christ, and offered to Sinners by the Gospel, and are not to be reckoned real Christians.

But though Men in Words may own Christ, and call themselves Christians, yet if they live in allowed Disobedience to the Rules of his Gospel, they are not sincere Christians. In *Tit. i. 6.* The Apostle says, *They profess that they know God, but in Works deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good Work reprobate.*

Thus it appears from infallible Proofs, that JESUS of Nazareth who was born of the Virgin Mary, who led a Life of Sufferings and Sorrows, who was crucified and put to Death under Pontius Pilate, and who rose again from the Dead the third Day; is Christ, the promised Saviour.

I have said thus much concerning the Sin of Unbelief, and of Professors being ashamed to own Christ, and his Gospel, to warn People against complying with any Temptations, which may incline them to be guilty of those Crimes.



LETTER IV.

Containing Remarks on some Parts of the Holy Scriptures, by which Persons may know themselves, whether they are sincere Christians, to whom the predicted Blessings do belong. And of their being in Covenant with God, and having the Holy Spirit dwelling in them: Likewise of the different Manner, in which the Holy Spirit bringeth Persons to be sincere Christians.



Shall now take Notice of some Parts of the Holy Scriptures from which we may know, who are real, serious Christians.

In *Matt. x. 3.* the Holy Jesus says, *Except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven:* Therefore they who are not converted, and do not become as little Children, are not real, and serious Christians; because sincere Christians have many Promises, which are a solid Ground of Assurance that they shall be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Another plain Conclusion may be added, *viz.* that therefore the Ministers of Christ, should explain, and prove the Necessity of that Conversion, which Christ speaks of.

In *John* iii. 3, 5. Christ the glorious Teacher, who came down from Heaven, says, *Except a Man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Except a Man be born of Water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* Therefore they who are not born again, born of Water, and of the Spirit, are not to be reckoned sincere Christians.

And therefore the Ministers of Christ should explain the Nature, and preach the Necessity of being born again, according to our Saviour's Doctrine.

In *2 Cor.* v. 17. It is said, *If any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature, old Things are past away, behold all Things are become new.* Therefore, they who are not new Creatures, they in whom the old Things are not past away, and in whom all Things are not become new, are not serious, or real Christians: And therefore also the Ministers of Christ should explain, and preach the Doctrine of the new Creature, and of the passing away of the old Things, and of the Nature, and Necessity of all Things becoming new.

True Christians are distinguished from others by their receiving Christ, and trusting in him, In *John* i. 12, It is said, *But as many as received him, to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, even to them, that believe on his Name.*

The Devils believe that Christ is the Saviour of Men, and believe what is related in the Gospels of his Birth, of his Doctrines, Miracles, Sufferings, Death and Resurrection, but they do not receive Christ; He was not offered to them;

True Believers receive him as their Saviour, and Prince, and consent to be subject to his Authority, and obedient to his Laws; and they trust in him for his great Salvation.

St. Paul speaking of Christ, says, to the heathen Converts at Ephesus, *In whom also we have obtained an Inheritance, being predestinated according to the Purpose of him, who worketh all Things after the Counsel of his own Will: That we (q. d. we Jews) should be to the Praise of his Glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

In whom ye (Gentiles) also trusted after that ye heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your Salvation: In whom also, after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise. Eph. i. 11, 12, 13.

True Believers, serious Christians, are distinguished by their *Love* to Christ, and their keeping his Commandments. *Unto you therefore which believe, He, (that is Christ) is precious,* says the Apostle, (1 Pet. ii. 7.) Therefore they to whom Christ is not precious, are not true Believers, or sincere Christians.

The same Apostle speaking of Christ unto Believers, says, *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory. (1 Pet. 8. i.)*

Divine Love with its happy Fruits, is the fulfilling of the Law.

In Deut. vi. 5. it is said, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind.*

So in Matt. xxii. 37. which implies that sincere Love to God is essential to true Piety.

In John xiv. 21. the blessed Jesus said, *He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him, and ver. 24. he says, He that loveth me not, keepeth not my Sayings.*

Whence

Whence it is evident, that they who truly love Christ, do keep his Commandments; and that they who live in Disobedience to them, do not sincerely love him, whatsoever they may profess; and they are not real Christians.

In John viii. 42. Jesus said to the Jews, *If God were your Father, ye would love me: For I proceeded forth, and came from God.* Therefore they who do not love Christ have not God for their Father, and are not real Christians.

I would further observe that real Christians, are Persons in Covenant with God. There is an holy Agreement, or Covenant between the great God and them: It is the Way, the Almighty has instituted of dealing with his beloved People: God made a Covenant with Noah. For it is said, *God spake unto Noah, and his Sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my Covenant with you, and with your Seed after you;* Gen. ix. 8, 9.

God also made a Covenant with Abraham. We read in Gen. xvii. 1, 2. that, *The Lord appeared unto Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect, And I will make my Covenant between me, and thee.*

Here are two Engagements in this solemn Covenant, viz. 1. God's gracious Promise to be Abraham's God, which implies the greatest Happiness and Honour, and also Abraham's Obligation to walk (or live) before God according to his Will, with Uprightness of Heart: 2. Abraham's Consent to walk as God required. And thus there was a mutual Agreement or Covenant between God and Abraham.

Frequent Mention is made throughout the Old Testament of God's Covenant: David in a Psalm of thanksgiving, said, *He is the Lord our God, his Judgments are in all the Earth, be ye mindful al-*

26 *On the Sacred Predictions.*

ways of his Covenant: The Word which he has commanded to a Thousand Generations, 1 Chron. xvi. 14, 15.

In *Pfal. xxv. 15.* It is said, *The Secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant.* He will make known to them, who are truly pious, some of his secret Purposes; and the Blessedness of their being in Covenant with him; but unto the Wicked God saith, *What has thou to do to declare my Statutes, or that thou shouldest take my Covenant in thy Mouth?* *Pfal. l. 16.*

Which plainly implies that the Wicked have no Interest in God's Covenant, and that he did not approve of their being Teachers of his Laws.

In *Iſaiab xlii. 5, 6.* we read, *Thus saith God the Lord, (that is to the Messiah) I the Lord have called thee in Righteousness, and will hold thine Hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a Covenant of the People, for a Light of the Gentiles.*

These Words import that God's Covenant with his People was intended to continue, not only till Christ came, but through the Times of the Gospel.

In *Jer. xi. 1—4.* It is written, *The Word that came to Jeremiab from the LORD, saying Hear, ye the Words of this Covenant, and speak unto the Men of Judab, and to the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, and say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, cursed be the Man, that obeyeth not the Words of this Covenant, which I commanded your Fathers in the Day that I brought them forth out of the Land of Egypt, from the Iron Furnace, saying, Obey my Voice and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my People, and I will be your God.*

Hence

Hence do appear the mutual Engagements between God, and his People in the Holy COVENANT, viz. on the People's Part, God commanded them to obey his Voice, and keep all his Commandments, and this the People consented, and promised to do.

They expressed to Moses their Consent, *Exod. xxiv. 3.* *All the People answered with one Voice, and said, All the Words which the LORD hath said will we do.*

In ver. the 7th, we read. *And he (i. e. Moses) took the Book of the Covenant, and read in the Audience of the People, and they said; all that the Lord hath said, will we do, and be obedient.*

This Engagement the People entered into :

On the Part of God, he consented to, and by Promise agreed that they should be his People, and himself would be their God.

It is likewise evident, that they who will not obey the Words of God's Covenant, and keep his Holy Commandments are *Cursed*.

God still deals with Men in the Way of a Covenant : Our glorious Redeemer is called by the Prophet Malachi, the Messenger of the Covenant, when he spake of the Messiah's Coming into the second Temple, *Mal. iii. 1.* where it is said, *Behold I will send my Messenger, and he shall prepare the Way before me ; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his Temple ; even the Messenger of the COVENANT whom ye delight in ; Behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

And in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he is declared to be the Mediator of the Covenant, (which under the Dispensation of the Gospel, is called a new Covenant, *Heb. viii. 6.* where the Apostle says, *But now hath he (that is Christ) obtained a more excellent Ministry, (that is better than the Ministry of Moses,) by how much also he is the*

Mediator of a better Covenant, which was established upon better Promises.

In *Heb. xiii. 20, 21.* the Apostle says, *now the God of Peace that brought again from the Dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his Sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be Glory for ever, and ever Amen.*

it Hence it appears that the Covenant of which Christ is the Mediator is an everlasting Covenant, ratified, and made sure by the shedding of his precious Blood for us on the Cross.

And all real Christians do devote themselves to God in Covenant; they desire to have the Lord for their God, their Lawgiver, their Portion and Happiness, and in the name of Christ give themselves to be his Servants; they desire to have Christ as the Mediator between God and them, they desire to have the Lord Jesus in all his Offices, and trust in him alone for all the Salvation they want; and they desire the Holy Spirit may dwell in them as a Sanctifier, and work in them both to will and to do, and to be always their Guide, and their Comforter.

Thus they do consent to be the Lord, and to live according to his Holy Will.

And all the Promises of the Gospel, shew God's consent to be their God; and thus it appears, that there is a mutual Agreement, or Covenant between the Holy God, and all sincere Christians.

There is another Thing to be observed as to real Christians, true Believers and of the utmost Importance, viz. that they have the *Holy Spirit dwelling in them*; they were born of the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit abideth in them.

The Predictions on Record in the Old Testament are a solid Ground for the People of God under that Dispensation, and for all true Believers under the Gospel, for expecting the great Blessing and Dignity of having the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.

In Ezek. xxxvi. 27. The God of Truth says, *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my Statues, and ye shall keep my Judgments, and do them.* A precious Promise! Which may comfort the Hearts of the Saints when they meet with Difficulties in the Way of their Duty; and may well encourage them when they meet with the Temptations, and Buffettings of the Devil.

And this great Blessing, the In-dwelling of God's Holy Spirit we should pray for it; and we are encouraged to do so, by the Words of our gracious Redeemer, in Luke xi. 13. where he says, *If ye then being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children: How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

In John vii. 38, 39. Christ says, *He that believeth on me, as the Scriptures hath said, out of his Belly shall flow Rivers of living Water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.*

In John xiv. 17. the blessed Jesus, speaking of the Holy Ghost, says, *Even the Spirit of Truth, whom the World cannot receive, because it seeth him not. neither knoweth him: But ye (said Christ to his Disciples) know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

In Gal. iii. 14. the Apostle says, *That the Blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the Promise of the Spirit (or the Spirit promised) through Faith.*

Whence

Whence it appears, that they who have the Faith which the Gospel requires, have also received the Holy Spirit.

In 2 Tim. i. 14. the Apostle says to Timothy, *That good Thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.*

The Sacred Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, speak abundantly of the Holy Spirit: David earnestly prayed, that God would not take his Holy Spirit from him.

where See Psa. li. 11, 12. ~~when~~ he prays thus, *Cast me not out from thy Presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the Joy of thy Salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit.*

And in like Manner we should pray, that God will not take his Holy Spirit from us; but continually uphold us with his free Spirit.

The Offices which the Holy Spirit performs for the Conversion of Sinners, and fitting them for everlasting Happiness in Mansions of Glory, are manifold, are excellent, and most important.

He worketh (I doubt not) in the Souls of all Men, that hear the Gospel-preached. He awakens their Consciences, he convinces them of Sin, and makes known to them, that God in his great Love has provided a Saviour, and a Saviour who is both able and willing to save all Sorts of Sinners, even the Chief of them: And if they remain in Unbelief, and go on in a Course of Disobedience to God, it is because they resist the Holy Ghost.

What the Martyr Stephen said to the stubborn unbelieving Jews, Acts vii. 51. *Ye Stiff necked, and uncircumcised in Heart and Ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost,* may be said to stubborn Unbelievers, who have Gospel preached to them.

The unbelieving Jews being charged with resisting the Holy Ghost, is an Evidence that the
Holy

Holy Ghost had been working on their Minds to become the Disciples of Christ.

The Holy Spirit performs the Offices of a Teacher, a Remembrancer, a Sanctifier, and a Comforter to all, who believe on the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit gave to the Apostles those wonderful Gifts, which they received at Pentecost: He enabled them to speak with Tongues, and gave them Utterance in Preaching the everlasting Gospel; he enabled them to confirm their Testimony of Christ, and the Doctrines they taught by a Series of Miracles thro' a Course of many Years, and in many Countries at the same Time: Christ purchased a great Salvation for Sinners, and the Holy Spirit makes the Application of it.

And his OPERATIONS prove that he is truly God.

For the Effects of his working could not be produced by any Creature.

One Man cannot communicate his Wisdom or Sagacity to another: Or a Man strong in Body, cannot communicate the like Strength to a Person whose Body is little and weak:

Neither can an Angel make any Creature:

But the Holy Spirit maketh new Creatures in Christ.

He turneth Sinners into Saints; which no Angel in Heaven can do.

His Operations prove him to be God, the third Person of the Sacred Trinity.

And the Words of the Apostle Peter in Acts v. 3, 4. do make known his Deity, when he says to Ananias on the Account of his speaking a Lie, *Why hath Satan filled thy Heart to lie to the Holy Ghost; — thou hast not lied unto Men, but unto God.*

Ananias's

Ananias's lying to the Holy Ghost, was a lying unto God ; which could not be unless the Holy Ghost is God.

And the Words of our blessed Saviour, in Matt. xii. 31, 32, are solemn and most awful, and require our special Notice. *I say unto you, (that is unto the People present,) All manner of Sin, and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men ; but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven unto Men. And whosoever shall speak a Word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him ; (on his Repentance) but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this World, neither in that which is to come.*

Let those who deride the Operations of the Holy Ghost ; those who make a Mock of his Workings in the Souls of Men, and they who deny his Being, think on these Words which are tremendous Predictions of our blessed Saviour, and will be fulfilled.

The Work of Men's Redemption, by the Recovery of them from their State of Sin and Misery, and bringing them into a State of Holiness, and fitting them for the perfect Enjoyment of God for ever, is a most glorious Work ! There is much Mystery in it : The Holy Angels desire to look unto it.

And for our Parts, we Christians see, but see as through a Glass darkly ; yet we see, and know so much by the Gospel, that if we believe in Christ, and shew our Faith, by Living according to the Rules of his Gospel we shall go to be with Christ, when we shall be taken out of this World.

But there is much imported in several Parts of the sacred Revelation, which we cannot dive into.

There

There seems to have been something excellent in Man's Nature before the Fall, which we are ignorant of.

The Condescension of the great and Holy God, his Pity and Love to such Apostate Creatures as the Offspring of Adam are, is amazing !

Only we know that there is nothing in us to deserve his Compassion, and that the Lord our Creator is gracious -only because he will be gracious.

God the Father loved the World, loved our Race of Creatures, and contrived our Redemption; and sent his only begotten and beloved Son to purchase and accomplish it.

God the Son condescended to come down from Heaven, and take into Union with himself our Nature, and to satisfy vindictive Justice, by the Sacrifice of himself on the Cross, and to work out a perfect Righteousness for our Justification.

And God the Holy Ghost undertook to make Application of the Redemption purchased by Christ : Stupendous Mercy and Goodness !

Now let the Father, and the Son,

And Spirit be ador'd :

Where there are Works to make him known,

Or Saints to love the Lord.

Watts's Hymns, p. 312.

And let all serious Christians keep in Remembrance, that the Holy Spirit dwelleth in them. *Know ye not (says the Apostle,) that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ? If any Man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy ; for the Temple of God is Holy, which Temple ye are. 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.*

We should cherish in our Minds such a Sense, of the Honour, of the Dignity and Happiness

of being the Temple of God, and having his Holy Spirit dwelling in us, as may render us watchful to avoid every Thing that is Sinful and Polluting, and to shun all Temptations.

We may conclude from what has been collected out of the Holy Scriptures into these Papers; that there is a great Change wrought in every real Christian, by the Spirit of God. And every sincere Christian can testify, as to himself that an Holy Change has been made in him.

His Conscience bears him witness, that his Mind has been convinced of the sinful Depravity of his Nature, and of the Odioufness of Sin, and of his Want of a Saviour; and that his Understanding has been enlightened to see the Truth of the Gospel, and that his Will has been so changed, that although he once was thoughtless of what would become of his Soul, and regardless of the Favour of God; of an Interest in Christ, and in the Covenant of Grace; yet that his Will has been so wrought upon, as to chose the Lord for his God, Christ for his Saviour, and the Holy Spirit for his Sanctifier; and so as to reject, and renounce all his former Sins, and the Devil and all his Temptations to go on in a Course of Sin: And his Conscience bears him Witness, that although formerly he loved this World chiefly, and the Things of it, the Honours, or the Riches, or the Pleasures of it, yet that now he loves God above all, that he loves the Redeemer, and loves all his Commandments, his Sabbaths, his Ordinances, and all who love the Lord Jesus in Sincerity, of every Denomination.

And he experiences a great and happy Change, as in his Heart, so in his Life and Conversation, for although formerly he was regardless of his Duty, negligent of the Worship
of

of God in Secret, in the Family, and in the publick Assemblies on the Lord's Day.

He now makes Conscience of those, and all other Duties; and although formerly his chief Satisfaction was in vain Company, and in sensual Pleasures, yet now he has a greater Value for Persons truly pious, and has more esteem for the Saints, those excellent Ones of the Earth, as they are called. *Psalm xvi. 3.*

He now exercises himself to have always a Conscience void of Offence, both towards God, and towards all Men.

Every since Christian has experienced a Holy Change wrought in him, and it was wrought by the Holy Spirit: But the Holy Spirit worketh differently in different Persons.

Some have been born of religious Parents, and have had a pious Education, have been brought up in the Nature and Admonition of the Lord, and been kept to a constant Attendance on the publick Worship of God, under the Preaching of the Gospel; and on some of these the Holy Spirit, gradually and as it were by insensible Degrees produces the Holy Change; so that they cannot tell the Month or Day, when they performed the first Act of true Faith, and became united to Christ; but on examining themselves, they may observe the Effects of the happy Change, and the Fruits and Evidences of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.

Sometimes notorious Sinners, Persons, who have led profligate Lives, to the Scandal of the Christian Profession, have by the just Providence of God been brought into great Distress and Want; like the Prodigal Son, or have been afflicted with some violent Distemper, or other great Calamity, and then the Holy Ghost has awakened their Consciences; and put their Sins in

Order before their Eyes, brought them to see their present Misery and their Danger of greater; then the Holy Spirit fills their Souls with Anguish inexpressible, and influences them to cry out, What shall I do to be saved? and then they see their Want of a Refuge to which they may fly; and then does the Holy Spirit open the Eyes of their Mind to see the Mighty, and compassionate Saviour, and encourages the trembling Souls, to fly to Christ, both for Salvation and Comfort.

The Prophet spoke of the blessed Jesus when he said, (Isa. xxxii. 2.) *A Man sha'l an kiding Place from the Wind, and a Cover from the Tempest, as Rivers of Water in a dry Place, as the Shadow of a great Rock in a weary Land.*

By this figurative, or metaphorical Description of our Redeemer, we may learn the Misery of guilty Sinners, as obnoxious to the Storms and Tempests of Divine Wrath, and likewise the all-sufficient Help, the Safety and Comfort, that are to be found in Christ.

And when the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to the amazed, and self abhorring, and self condemning Sinner, and thus suggests to him; *believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.* How does the poor Heart begin to rejoice? How is it agitated between Hope and Fear? How is it amazed with the glad Tidings that there is a Saviour, and a Saviour able and willing to save him! O can such a Wretch as I have been, be saved? Is the Holy God, against whom I have rebelled so many Years, willing to pardon me, and willing to be reconciled to me! And is the blessed Jesus whom I have so often slighted, and disregarded, and so often resisted his Government, is he willing to save me after all the Indignities and Provocations which I have been guilty of?

Amazing Grace: Astonishing Mercy!

Blessed

Blessed Jesus I believe, thou art the Son of God, and the Saviour, and the only Saviour of Men: Lord help mine Unbelief! O save me, save me, or I perish! I fly to thee for Refuge, from all the Vengeance I am obnoxious to! O Jesus of Nazareth, thou Son of David, thou blessed Son of God have Mercy on me! Is not thy Name called Jesus, because thou savest thy People from their Sins? O save me from all my Sins, and from all the Punishment and Miseries which my Sins have deserved;

Lord if thou wilt, thou can't make my filthy Soul clean; my ignorant Soul wise unto Salvation! I renounce my Sins, and I give up myself to thee, to be thy Disciple and Servant:

Shew Pity, Lord, O Lord forgive,
Let a repenting Rebel live:
Are not thy Mercies large and free?
May not a Sinner trust in Thee?

My Crimes are great, but not surpass
The Power, and Glory of thy Grace:
O wash my Soul from every Sin,
And make my guilty Conscience clean:

O save a trembling Sinner, Lord,
Whose Hope still hovering round thy Word,
Would light on some sweet Promise there,
Some sure Support against Despair.

Watt's Psal. 51.

Thus the Holy Spirit sometimes makes Converts, among those who have lived dissolute Lives; and happy Fruits of it, soon appear: For they immediately discard their old Companions in Sin; they who seldom went to the House of God to join in the Worship of him, now are constantly there: Now many of their former

former Acquaintance deride them, and now all pious Persons, who know any thing of them rejoice in their Conversion. Such a Convert may say,

When God revealed his gracious Name,
 And chang'd my sinful State,
 My Rapture seem'd a pleasing Dream,
 The Grace appear'd so great.

The World beheld the glorious Change,
 And did his Hand confess,
 My Tongue broke out in unknown Strains,
 And sung surprizing Grace.

Great is the Work, my Neighbours cry'd,
 And own'd the Power Divine ;
 Great is the Work, my Heart reply'd,
 And be the Glory Thine.

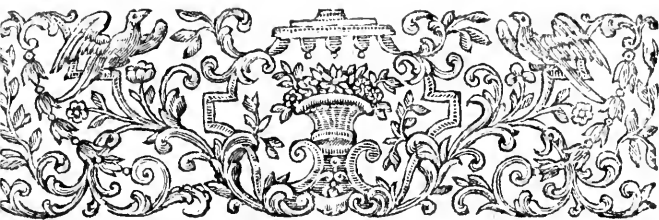
Watt's Psalms, Psal. 126.

And how thankful are such Converts, for the holy and happy Change of their Condition, and thankful even for the Afflictions which were the Means of it: Such a Christian can say,

Father, I bless thy chaf'ning Hand ;
 How kind was thy rebuking Rod,
 Which forc'd my Conscience to a Stand,
 And brought my wand'ring Soul to God !

Foolish and vile, I went astray,
 E'er I had felt thy Scourges, Lord,
 I left my Guide, and lost my Way ;
 But now I love, and keep thy Word.

Watt's Psalms, Psal. 110:



LETTER V.

On the Predictions, of the great Blessings, which in this Life are bestowed on every Believer; viz. Justification, Adoption, and Sanctification; Blessings absolutely necessary to the Safety, the Comfort, and Happiness of every Man; and which import a great Variety of Benefits; even Afflictions are intended as a Means to promote the Holiness, and the future Happiness of Christians; and likewise of Predictions, encouraging Backsliders to return unto God.

I Shall now proceed more particularly to consider those PREDICTIONS of the Blessings, which are given to sincere Christians in this Life; but must observe that there are no Predictions of Immunity to them from Troubles in this World, but several of Afflictions in this Life, which therefore they should expect.

It is said, Man that is born of a Woman is of few Days, and full of Trouble. Job xiv. 1.

And it is said, Psal. xxxiv. 19. Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous, but it is there foretold, that the Lord delivereth him out of them all.

Our

Our blessed Saviour foretold to his Disciples; that Troubles would befall them; for in John xvi. 32. he said to them, *In the World ye shall have Tribulation.*

In Heb. xii. 6. it is said, *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth, and ver. 8. But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are Partakers, then are ye Bastards, and not Sons.*

Yet notwithstanding all the Troubles and Afflictions, which true Believers meet with in this Life, it will appear from the Predictions of Blessings relating to them, that they are truly happy, and the only Persons that are so in this World, as well as in the next: Particularly from the following.

I. Prediction. JUSTIFICATION is one of the Blessings purchased by Christ, and revealed in his Gospel, and is that Act of God by which he accepts of a Sinner as righteous in his Sight, and forgives all his Sins, and becomes reconciled to him: And this Act of Divine Grace is predicted; It is foretold that they should be justified, and pardoned.

In *Isa. xlv. 25.* it is said, *In the Lord (that is, the Lord Jesus Christ) shall all the Seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory,* that is, all the spiritual Seed, all who truly believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, shall be justified in him by Faith; and in *Isa. liii. 11.* it is said, *By his Knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many; for he shall bear their Iniquities.* (i. e. the Punishment, which their Iniquities deserved.)

In *Acts xiii. 39.* it is said, *By him, all that believe are justified from all Things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses.*

The Apostle Paul says, *Rom. v. 1. Being justified by Faith, we have peace with God through our*

our Lord Jesus Christ; and ver. 9. Being justified by his Blood, we shall be saved from Wrath through him.

In Tit. iii. 7. That being justified by his Grace, we should be made Heirs, according to the Hope of eternal Life.

It appears from the Texts now cited,

1. That Men are justified by Faith: And therefore as soon as Sinners truly believe in Christ, they are justified.

2. That no Persons are justified by a Course of evangelical Obedience persisted in till their Death; for if Justification was to be obtained in that Way, Men could not be justified and their Sins pardoned, till that Course of Obedience should be compleated; and till then, they would remain under Condemnation by God's Law, and destitute of the Pardon of their Sins, and of a solid Ground for Peace and Comfort in their Consciences.

Miserable Comforters are they who preach such Doctrine; but the Gospel assures us that we are justified by Faith, that is, as soon as we believe.

3. That they who believe have the Pardon of their Sins, a Discharge from Condemnation, Peace with God, and are made Heirs of God.

There is therefore now no Condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom. viii. 1.

The Prediction of the Blessing of Justification to them who believe, and the Accomplishment of it, shews that sincere Christians are brought into a very happy Condition.

Before their Faith in Christ, they were under a dreadful Sentence of Condemnation to everlasting Punishments and Miseries: Not one of their numberless Sins was pardoned; but the wretched Persons were Objects of God's Wrath and Curse,

and they were obnoxious to the Pains of Hell for ever, till they believe.

They that remain in a State of Unbelief, and of wilful Disobedience to the Holy, and good God, do remain in a miserable Condition! A Condition, miserable beyond Expression, and beyond Thought; and no Honours, no Dignities, in this World, no stately Houses, no great Estates, no large Possessions, nor Heaps of Riches, nor all the Pleasures of Sense, can render their Condition better.

In the Midst of the greatest Affluence of earthly Felicities, they are but condemned Malefactors in the Sight of God; and the Lord the Judge of all, may unexpectedly send Death the Executioner to take them away, and remove them to be among the Devils, who are reserved in Chains under Darkeness against the Judgment of the great Day.

But as soon as any Sinner by a Faith unfeigned closes with Christ, be he high or low, or rich, or poor, he is immediately freed from the Guilt of all his Sins; the Sentence of his Condemnation is cancelled; all his Iniquities are forgiven; the Holy, and offended God is at Peace with him, and reconciled to him, and he is justified in his Sight.

But how is it, that a Sinner is justified?

This indeed is a Question, and a Question of the utmost Moment; and the Gospel answers it.

That it is by Faith; by Faith as the Instrument, or Means, and by Faith alone.

St. Paul says, *not by Works of Righteousness, which we have done.* Titus iii. 5.

Therefore by the Deeds of the Law, there shall no Flesh be justified in his Sight, (that is in the Sight of God,) for by the Law is the Knowledge of Sin, Rom. iii. 20. as if he had said, No

Man

Man by performing the Deeds, which the Law requires, shall be justified; because by examining his Course of Life, and all his Actions by the Law, he will know himself guilty of many Sins, notwithstanding the Number of Duties he may have performed.

And ver. 9. the Apostle takes Notice, that they had before proved both Jews, and Gentiles, that they are all under Sin; (that is under the Guilt and Curse of Sin.)

But what is Righteousness? It may be replied to this Question, that Righteousness in a rational Creature, Righteousness in a Man is that Course of Life, and Actions, which consists in the Performance of the Duties he owes to God, to himself, and to his Fellow Creatures, and in a total Abstinence from every Thing, which God has forbidden.

If there is a Neglect of any of the Duties commanded, or a Doing any Thing that is forbidden by the Divine Law, that Man's Righteousness is imperfect, and the more numerous his Omissions of Duty, and his Transgressions are in doing the Things forbidden, the more imperfect it is.

If his Righteousness was perfect for a Course of Years, yet that Righteousness could make no Amends for the Sins committed before that Course was begun: But there is no such Thing as a perfect Course of Righteousness performed by any Man through the Space of one Year, or Month, or Day; and an imperfect Righteousness can never make any Man to appear perfectly righteous in the Sight of the Holy God.

Therefore no Man can be justified by the Duties he performs.

We may well say with the Psalmist, *If thou, Lord, shouldest mark Iniquities, O Lord who shall*

stand? *Pfal.* cxxx. 3. And we may say to God with David. *Pfal.* cxliii. 1, 2. *Hear my Prayer, O Lord! — and enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, for in thy Sight shall no Man living be justified, that is by his own Deeds.*

We have Reason to confess to God, and say *Isa.* lxiv. 6. *we are all as an unclean Thing, and all our Righteousnesses are as filthy Rags.*

And therefore no Man has any Ground to expect Justification in the Sight of the All seeing God, by his own Righteousness.

If we consider the manifold Defects in our Obedience; and how our best Services are polluted with Mixtures of Sin, we shall see abundant Reason to admire the Grace and Goodness of God, in providing another Righteousness for our Justification; even the Righteousness of his own beloved Son: We shall see Reason to adore and bless God for appointing Christ, who had fulfilled all Righteousness to be the End of the Law, for Righteousness to every one that believeth. *Rom.* x. 4.

They who go about to establish their own Righteousness, are ignorant of God's Righteousness, the Righteousness which he hath appointed for our Justification, and have not submitted themselves unto the Righteousness of God: As we may conclude from what is said in *ver.* 3. and we may also conclude that they have no Interest in it.

In *Rom.* iii. 20, 21. the Apostle after he had concluded, (*ver.* 20) *that by the Deeds of the Law,* (that is the Duties performed in Obedience to it,) *no Flesh* (or no Man) *shall be justified in his Sight,* (that is in the Sight of God,) he says in *ver.* 21. *But now the Righteousness of God,* (not his Attribute of Righteousness, or Holiness, but the Righteousness, which he appointed for the Justification of the Ungodly, without their

Obedience to the Law, that is, the Righteousness of the Messiah,) *is manifest, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets: and ver. 22. Even the Righteousness of God, which is (received) by Faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them, that believe.* Not that the Attribute of God is unto all, and upon all them that believe, but the Righteousness of Christ, which is received by Faith, and imputed to all, and is always upon all them that believe in his Name.

We should cherish the same Dispositions in our Souls, which the Apostle expresses in Phil. iii. 8, 9. where he says, *Yea, doubtless, and I count all Things but loss, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the Loss of all Things, and do count them but Dung, that I may win Christ,*

And be found in him, not having mine own Righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the Faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith.

I dare not think of appearing before the Holy and All-seeing God, with no better Righteousness than my own; I dare not enter into his Presence clothed only with my own filthy Rags.

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before him, with Burnt-Offerings, with Calves of a Year old? Vain Sacrifices. Will the Lord be pleased with Thousands of Rams, or with ten Thousands of Rivers of Oil? No, they are worthless Oblations. Shall I give my First-Born for my Transgression, the Fruit of my Body for the Sin of my Soul? Impious Thoughts! As if the Merciful God, who forbid Murder, could be appeased by murdering human Bodies in Sacrifice to him.

Yet there is a sure Way, and a most comfortable Way, for the most guilty Sinner to obtain
Justi-

Justification before God, Reconciliation to him, and Peace with him; and the Way is to obtain the Knowledge of Christ, and by Faith to receive, and trust in him, and in his Righteousness, which he wrought.

O merciful God, I earnestly pray that thou wilt not deal with me according to my own Righteousness polluted with numberless Sins, both of Omission and Commission! Grant that I may be found in Christ having on his Righteousness, which he wrought for the Justification of Sinners, who believe in him.

No more, my God, I boast no more
Of all the Duties, I have done;
I quit the Hopes, I held before,
To trust the Merits of thy Son.

Now for the Knowledge of his Name,
What was my Gain, I count my Loss,
My former Pride, I call my Shame,
And nail my Glory to his Cross.

Yea, and I must, and will esteem
All Things but Loss for JESUS Sake;
O may my Soul be found in him,
And of his Righteousness partake!

The best Obedience of my Hands,
Dares not appear before thy Throne:
But Faith can answer thy Demands,
By pleading what my Lord has done.

WATTS.

It is evident from what has been collected out of the Holy Scriptures, that all who truly believe in the Lord Jesus, are justified in the Sight of God from all their Sins; all their Sins are forgiven them, the Holy God is reconciled to them,

them, and at Peace with them, as soon as ever they perform that Faith in Christ which the Gospel requires: Likewise it is manifest that their receiving this great Blessing of Justification, is a fulfilling of Predictions on Record in the Word of God.

The Contemplation of the inestimable Benefits imported in this great Blessing, may administer Comfort to serious Christians at all Times; and not only in Times of Prosperity, but in Times of personal and family Trouble, and in Times of publick Calamities.

In every Time of Affliction and Distress, it is matter of Comfort to consider, that the righteous God, is my reconciled God, and has received me into the Number of his beloved People, and is my God in Covenant.

II. Prediction. ADOPTION, is another of the Blessings, which the Holy Jesus purchased for all that shall believe in his Name.

It is predicted of Believers, that they shall be *Children of God*; that is, it is foretold that they shall have the great Blessing and Honour of Adoption by the Almighty into the Number of his Sons and Daughters.

A. In Jer. xxxi. 9. the Lord says, *I am a Father to Israel.* And so he was to Abraham and to Isaac; and so he was and is, and will be to all the spiritual Seed of Abraham; to all who are Israelites indeed, Children of Abraham's Faith, in all Ages, past, present, and future.

B. In Isa. lxiii. 16. the People of God are represented, as saying, *Doubtless thou art our Father.*—*Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy Name is from Everlasting.*

- C. In John i. 12. it is said, *But to as many as received him, (that is Christ) to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, even to them, that believe on his Name.*
- D. The Apostle Paul says, *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God. For ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. Rom. viii. 14, 15. And in ver. 17. he says, And if Children, then Heirs; Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ.*
- E. Rom. ix. 26. We read, *And it shall come to pass that in the Place (i. e. in the heathen Countries, where the People knew not God, nor Jesus Christ,) where it was said unto them, Ye are not my People, there (upon their Conversion to Faith in Christ, by the Preaching of the Gospel) shall they be called the Children of the living God.*
- F. In 2 Cor. vi. 15, &c. the Apostle says, (to the Saints at Corinth) *What Concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what Part hath he that believeth with an Infidel? And what Agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols? For ye are the Temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my People. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the LORD, and touch not the unclean Thing, and I will receive you.*
- G. *And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my Sons, and Daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

- H. In Gal. iii. 26. the Apostle says, *Ye are all the Children of God by Faith in Christ Jesus.*
- I. In Gal. iv. 4, 5. it is said, *God sent forth his Son, — To redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the Adoption of Sons.*
- K. Ver. 7. *Wherefore thou art no more a Servant, but a Son; and if a Son, then an Heir of God through Christ.*
- L. In Eph. i. 5, 6. the Apostle says, *Having predestinated us to the Adoption of Children by Jesus Christ to himself; according to the good Pleasure of his Will, to the Praise of the Glory of his Grace, wherein he has made us accepted through the Beloved.*
- M. In 1 John iii. 1. it is said, *Behold what Manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God. ver. 2. Beloved now are we the Sons of God.*

These Texts of the Holy Scriptures now recited instruct us in the following Particulars, *viz.*

1. That God was, is, and will be the FATHER of all that believe and obey his Word. See Letters A. B. C.

2. That all such Persons are adopted into the Number of his Children. See Letters C. D. E.

3. That Faith is the Means by which those who have been wilful Sinners, the Children of the Devil; do become the Children of God. See Letters C. H.

Therefore when a Man (or as soon as a Man) believes in Christ, God gives him, and he receives the great Blessing of Adoption :

4. That the Adoption into the Number of the Children of God, is a Blessing purchased for us by Jesus Christ. See Letter I.

5. That they who have received the Adoption are *Heirs* of God, Heirs to an Inheritance most glorious and everlasting ; but of this, I shall say more hereafter. See Letters D. K.

6. That Adoption is an Act of God's free Grace. See Letters L. M. Behold what Manner of Love the Father hath bestowed on us in making us his Children ! A wonderful Instance of free Favour utterly undeserved by us !

7. That true Believers are predestinated of God to this Felicity. See Letter L.

O how great is the Happiness of all sincere Christians ? To be the Children of God is the highest Dignity. *This Honour have all the Saints.*

But the Unbelieving, and Disobedient have it not : No, they are of their Father the Devil, and the Lust of their Father they do.

But this great *Blessing* includes many others ; which are a Ground of Comfort at all Times.

They are very many : I shall only select some of them, as follows. *viz.*

1. God has foretold, that he will give them his PRESENCE.

His gracious Presence will make a Wilderness to be a Paradise : how often has it made Prisons, Houses of Joy, and Gladness to the persecuted Saints ? The Omnipresence of God, which excites painful Thoughts in the Minds of the Wicked, when they think upon it, gives a Pleasure to serious Christians.

And

And how should we daily pray for God's Presence with us? We may pray for it with a cheerful Hope, if we read some of his Predictions.

In *Exod.* xxxiii. 14. God says, *My Presence shall go with thee.* In *Psal.* cxi. 13. It is said to God, *the Upright shall dwell in thy Presence.*

In *Isa.* xli. 10. God says, *Fear thou not, for I am with Thee.* In *Deut.* xxxi. 8, It is said, *The LORD, he it is that doth go before thee, he will be with Thee, He will not fail Thee, neither forsake Thee.*

And in *John* xiv. 23. Christ says, *If any Man love me, he will keep my Words: And my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our Abode with him.*

Let serious Christians contemplate these Declarations frequently; and with the Influence of the Holy Spirit, they will derive much Comfort from them.

2. It is likewise predicted, that God will hear the Prayers, and grant the Petitions of his Children.

It is a great Advantage for a Man to have a rich and compassionate Friend, able and willing to supply and help him on every Occasion:

But the Favour of God affords inexpressibly more abundant Consolation.

And there are gracious Predictions that he will regard the Prayers of his People.

In *Psal.* iv. 3. It is said, *But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: The Lord will hear, when I call unto him.*

In *Psal.* xxxiv. 15. It is written, *The Eyes of the LORD are upon the Righteous, and his Ears are open unto their Cry.* ver. 17. *The Righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their Troubles.*

In *Pfal.* c. l. v. 19. It is said, *He will fulfill the Desire of them that fear him: He also will hear their Cry, and will save them.* Comfortable Predictions!

In *Zeck.* xiii. 9. Our good God says, *They shall call on my Name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my People, And they shall say, the LORD is my God.*

In *Matt.* vii. 7. Our loving Redeemer says to his Disciples, *Ask, and it shall be given you: Seek and ye shall find: Knock and it shall be opened unto you.*

And in *Matt.* xxi. 22. he says, *And all Things whatsoever ye shall ask in Prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*

These are comfortable *Predictions*; and many, very many more of like Import I might mention; for the Sacred Scriptures abound with them. They are Evidences of our Heavenly Father's Loving-kindness to his Children.

O what Encouragements has he given unto us to the Duty of Prayer? And to pray with humble Hope of Success to our Petitions? None of his Children ever sought his Face in vain, nor trusted, nor hoped in him in vain.

If serious Christians did record the Petitions they ask of Him, and the gracious Answers to them, which they receive from Him, what a Display of the Divine Power, Goodness, Mercy, and Faithfulness might they behold in God's Dealings with them?

The Predictions mentioned, and the Accomplishment of them, should be improved to confirm our Faith, heighten our Love, and our thankfulness to our Father, which is in Heaven; and they should more and more endear our glorious Saviour and Mediator to our Souls.

As

As we offer up our Supplications at the Throne of Grace in his Name, and as He is continually making Intercession for us, so it is for his Sake, that we are accepted with the Father, and that our Requests are granted.

In *John* xvi. 24. Christ said unto his Disciples, *Hitherto, ye have asked nothing in my Name. Ask, (q. d. in my Name,) and ye shall (for my Sake,) receive, that your Joy may be full.*

III. SANCTIFICATION, is another of the great Blessings predicted for true Believers, and is that Work, by which polluted Sinners become Holy in Heart and Life, and are renewed more and more after the Image of God.

This, is the Work of God's Holy Spirit: It begins when true Faith begins in the Soul of a Sinner.

The Blessings of Justification and Adoption, tho' different the one from the other, yet are conjoin'd, and are bestowed on the Believer, in the same Article of Time; and at the same Time the glorious Work of a Sinner's *Sanctification* does also begin.

But this is gradually carried on through the Course of a Believer's Life, from his first being born again to the Time of his Death; when Believers are made perfect in Holiness.

This, indeed, is a most blessed and important Work of the Holy Spirit. It is that Divine Operation by which we are renew'd in the Likeness and Image of God. A Blessing absolutely necessary to fit us for the happy Enjoyment of him; *Because without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.* Heb. xii. 14.

But this Blessing (as is evident from the Sacred Scriptures,) belongs to them that believe in Christ.

The holy Jesus, when he pray'd for all his true Disciples to his Father, said, *Sanctify them through thy Truth: thy Word is Truth.* John xvii. 17. And ver. 19. he adds, *And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the Truth.*

The Apostle Paul said to the believing Thessalonians, *For this is the Will of God, even your Sanctification.* 1 Thes. iv. 3. And in 2 Thes. ii. 13. *God hath from the Beginning chosen you to Salvation, through Sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the Truth.*

The Apostle Peter calls the true Believers, *Elect according to the Foreknowledge of God the Father, through Sanctification of the Spirit unto Obedience.* 1 Peter i. 2.

The Apostle Paul says to Titus, Chap. ii. 11. *The Grace of God which bringeth Salvation hath (by the Gospel) appeared to all Men, teaching us that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we shou'd live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World; looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself (by the Operation of the Holy Spirit,) a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.* See also Tit. iii. 4—7.

The Way which infinite Wisdom has contriv'd, for the Recovery and Salvation of fallen Man is most remarkable: For as our first Parents fell into a State of Sin and Misery, through a proud Ambition of being wiser, and in a higher Rank than their glorious Creator thought fit; and through Unbelief of God's Word to them; for they believed the Words of the Devil, and disbelieved the Words of the Lord, who made them: So the righteous and wise God has seen fit

fit to require Men to believe his Word; the Word of the Truth of the Gospel, and to disbelieve the Suggestions of the Devil.

And he requires all Men to believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and to follow after Holiness; and sent his beloved Son into the World that they might be saved from their Sins, sanctified and fitted to dwell with Him.

It is the Will of God that we should be holy; holy in our Hearts, in our Lives and Conversations.

But we cannot make ourselves holy: No, therefore our merciful God and Saviour, has sent down the Holy Spirit to perform the Office of a *Sanctifier* to us. And the more attentive to, and observant we are of the Word of God, that Word of Truth, and of the Motions of the Holy Spirit, the more prosperously proceeds the Work of Sanctification in us.

But they who always resist the Holy Ghost, and quench the Spirit, are not like to have the holy Fruits of the Spirit in them.

We should daily pray for the Holy Spirit always to dwell in us, and guide us in the Way wherein we should go, and always to help us to perform every Duty, and restrain us from every Thing that is sinful, and enable us to withstand and overcome every Temptation.

But notwithstanding the Holiness of sincere Christians, God sees fit by Afflictions to try their Faith and Patience; and to moderate their Affections to this World, to purge away their Dross, and to keep them circumspect in their Passage through it.

Man that is born of a Woman is of few Days, and full of Trouble. (Job xiv. 1.) And the Troubles of the Saints are some of the Means of their Sanctification.

But

But there are many Predictions on Record in the Holy Scriptures replete with Comfort for the Children of God, in regard to the Afflictions they meet with in their Course through this World.

Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous, be they high, or low in Life. Job, and David, and Lazarus, and all the rest of God's People in every Age, and every Country, have found it so, in their own Experience.

But that is a comfortable Prediction in *Rom. viii. 28.* which says, *All Things* (adverse and prosperous) *work* (i. e. shall work,) *together for Good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his Purpose.*

And so is that recorded in *Isa. xliii. 1, 2.* where it is written, *Thus saith the LORD, that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy Name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the Waters* (i. e. of Afflictions) *I will be with thee, and through the Rivers* (of Calamities) *they shall not overflow thee: (thou shalt not perish under them) when thou walkest through the Fire* (through fiery Trials,) *thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the Flame kindle upon thee; but thou shalt remain safe in all sorts of Troubles.*

Afflictions are intended as a Means to promote Holiness, and to keep the Children of God diligent, and faithful in their Obedience to him.

God promised his People many Blessings if they would forbear Idolatry, and keep his Sabbaths, and reverence his Sanctuary, and walk in his Statutes, and keep his Commandments: And he threatened to bring many Calamities upon them, if they would not hearken unto him, and would not do all his Commandments. *Levit. xxvi. 7. and ver. 14.*

Our heavenly Father *doth not afflict willingly, nor (willingly) grieve the Children of Men.* Lament. iii. 33. They are chastised only when it is needful.

The Apostle Peter having mentioned to the Saints, the Inheritance reserved in Heaven for them, and the Salvation revealed in the Gospel, says, *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a Season, (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold Temptations.* 1 Pet. i. 6.

And serious Christians have reason to be patient under their Troubles, and to suppress every murmuring Thought, and remember, *That whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth, even as a Father the Son, in whom he delighteth.* Prov. iii. 11.

The Apostle says, Heb. xii. 6. *Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth:* And the Psalmist said, (Psal. xcix. 12.) *Blessed is the Man, whom thou chasteneth, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy Law.*

When Divine Providence brings Afflictions on us, our heavenly Father is then teaching us, and we should learn the Lessons which he teaches; we should see his Name, hear the Rod, and him who appointed it. Mich. vi. 9.

And the Children of God do find much Benefit by their heavenly Fathers chastening.

We know the Experience of the holy Psalmist, from his saying to God, *Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I have kept thy Word.* Psal. cxix. 67. and ver. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes.* ver. 75. *I know, O Lord, that thy Judgments are right, and that thou in Faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

God's People in all Ages have the like Experience: through the Temptations of the World, and the Flesh, through the Enticements of Acquaintance, and the Remainder of indwelling Sin,

Christians often grow negligent of their Duties, and fall into sinful Compliances with Customs offensive to the Holy God; till He brings some Afflictions upon them, and his Spirit by Means of them, awakens their Consciences to search their Hearts, to examine and amend their Ways.

O my Father which art in Heaven! Help me by thy Grace to walk so circumspectly, so diligently and chearfully before thee, in the Way of Obedience to all thy Commandments, that Afflictions may become less needful for me.

O that the Lord would guide my Way
To keep his Statutes still!

O that my God would grant me Grace
To know, and do his Will.

O send thy Spirit down to write,
Thy Law upon my Heart;

Nor let my Tongue indulge Deceit,
Nor act the Liars part!

Make me to walk in thy Commands,
'Tis a delightful Road;

Nor let my Head, or Heart, or Hands,
Offend against my God.

Watts's Psalms 111.

When Christians for a while go on in the Neglect of any known Duty, or in the Commission of any known Sin, they bring upon themselves the Character of BACKSLIDERS from God, and it is a great Mercy, when his Providences follow them with one Calamity after another, till their Consciences are awaken'd, and they are brought to consider the Evil of their Doings, and to repent of their Sins, and to seek the Forgiveness of them through Christ Jesus.

That

That is a comfortable Prediction in Isa. xxvii. 2. *By this therefore shall the Iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the Fruit (intended) to take away his Sin.*

God's using all proper Means to cleanse his Children from their Iniquities, and to recover them to their Duty, when they have gone astray from the Way of it, is an Evidence of his Fatherly Love and Care of them.

O the Condescension of the holy God to such Offenders! *Turn O backsliding Children saith the Lord. Jer. iii. 14. and in Hof. xiv. 4. I will heal their Backslidings, I will love them freely.*

How does the Father of Mercies manifest his Compassion and Love, to his transgressing Children! He draws them with the Cords of Love.

And how should the Thoughts of the divine Loving-kindness, melt the Souls of Backsliders into Shame and Sorrow for their sinful Departures from their God and Father.

How should every one of them think, and say, thus within themselves. How have I sinned against the Lord; how great are the Provocations which I have been guilty of? My Father has been continually laying Obligations on me to love and serve him, and is always doing me good, and preserving me from numberless Evils; but how base has been my Behaviour? All the Instances of his Patience and Favour, shew the heinous Nature of my Sins: Sins committed against astonishing Goodness, I have forfeited his Love: O holy God! May such a wicked Wretch as I have been call thee Father? Thou mightest not only disinherit me, but justly doom me to Death eternal, for being a rebellious Son.

Have I then any Reason to think God will receive me, if I return to him?

Hark! O my Soul! He calls to thee, he says, *Return unto me ye backsliding Children, and I will heal your Backslidings.* (Jer. iii. 22.) And now, O my Soul, answer, *Behold, I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God.*

And may I not take encouragement to do so, from the Parable of the prodigal Son? He spent all the Substance his Father gave him in riotous Living; but when he had suffered sore Distresses, and was reduced to great Want, he resolved to return Home, and to humble himself, and to intreat his Father to receive him again into his Family, though it was but as one of his hir'd Servants.

This Prodigal when he came to himself, when he came to be in a right Mind, and to a due Sense of his sad Condition, said, (Luke xv. 18. 19.) *I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son; make me as one of thy hir'd Servants.*

He went, and his loving and forgiving Father, (when he was yet a great Way off) *saw him, and had Compassion, and ran, and fell upon his Neck, and kissed him.* ver. 20.

He received his penitent Child, he was immediately reconciled to him, and rejoiced in his Conversion, and abraidied him not with his past Sins.

And may I not hope that my heavenly Father will receive and forgive me? And be reconciled to me; for he is a merciful God, and delighteth in Mercy.

O gracious God, though thou mightest reject me with Abhorrence, though I am no more worthy to be called thy Son, yet for the Sake of the blessed Jesus, pardon my Sins, receive me again into
thy

thy Favour, for in his Name I return unto thee !
And Lord evermore keep me in the Way of Faith
and Holiness, Amen.

*He will turn again, he will have Compassion on us ;
he will subdue all our Iniquities ; and thou wilt cast
all their Sins into the Depth of the Sea.* Said the
Prophet Micah unto God. Mic. vii. 10. Com-
fortable Words !

God will chastise his adopted Children ; he
may hide his Face from them, but he will not cast
them off for ever.

*If his Children forsake my Laws, (says God,)
and walk not in my Judgments ; if they break my
Statutes, and keep not my Commandments : Then
will I visit their Transgressions with a Rod, and
their Iniquity with Stripes. Nevertheless, my
Loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him,
nor suffer my Faithfulness to fail ; my Covenant will
I not break, nor alter the Thing that is gone out of
my Lips.* Psal. lxxxix. 30—34.

If God's Children go astray like a lost Sheep,
(as the Psalmist did, Psal. cxix. 176.) he will re-
cover, and bring them back.

Our great Redeemer calleth true Believers his
Sheep. In John x. 27, 28. he says, *My Sheep
hear my Voice, and I know them, and they follow
me. And I give unto them eternal Life, and they
shall never perish, neither shall any* (neither wicked
Men nor Devils) *pluck them out of my Hands.*

A plain Proof these Words are, that Christ
our good Shepherd, who laid down his Life for
the Sheep, will certainly bring all true Believers
to the Possession of eternal Life. If any of them
wander from him, he will find them out, and
bring them back to his Fold.

The Apostle Paul in his Epistle to all the Saints
in Christ Jesus, (Philip. i. 1.) in ver. 6. assures
them of the Certainty of their Perseverance ; for

he says, *Being confident of this very Thing, that he which hath begun a good Work in you, will perform it (or carry it on) until the Day of Jesus Christ.*

And the Apostle Peter establishes the same Doctrine, in 1 Pet. i. 5. where speaking of true Believers, he says, *Who are kept by the Power of God through Faith unto Salvation: and as this is true, so is it true also, That at last they will receive the End of their Faith, even the Salvation of their Souls.*

This is a comfortable Doctrine to serious Christians, when in the Course of their Pilgrimage through the Wilderness of this World towards the heavenly Canaan, they meet with Difficulties and Dangers; and they are afraid they shall not be able to hold out to the End of Life.

As David was afraid that one Day or other, he should perish by the Hand of Saul, though God had promised to make him King of Israel: So serious Christians have sometimes dismal Fears on the Account of their great Frailty, and the strong Oppositions they meet with in the Way of their Duty.

But it is matter of Comfort to consider, that we are not left to ourselves: No, Christ the Captain of our Salvation has undertaken to obtain for us a compleat Salvation; we have fled to him for Refuge, and we have committed ourselves to Him, both Souls and Bodies, to be saved by him from all our Sins, and from all the Miseries which our Sins have deserved, and from all our Spiritual Enemies.

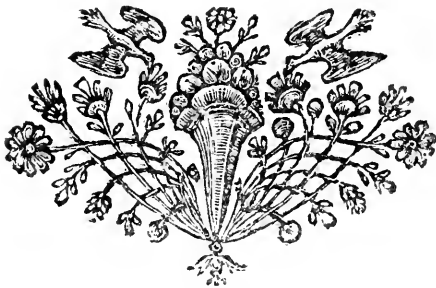
The Apostle said to Timothy, *I know whom I have believed, (or trusted,) and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that Day.* 2 Tim. i. 13. And every sincere Christian may say the same.

And

And (in Rom. viii. 35——37.) he says, *Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ? Shall Tribulation, or Distress, or Persecution, or Famine, or Nakedness, or Peril, or Sword? Nay, in all these Things we are more than Conquerors, through him that loved us.*

Although without Christ we can do nothing, yet through his strengthening us, we shall be able to hold on our Way, and obtain a compleat Victory over all the Principalities and Powers of Darkness.

The Contemplation of these Things may console our Minds, and relieve us from uneasy, unbelieving Fears.





LETTER VI.

On the Afflictions of serious Christians, and the Predictions, which may comfort them in the Times of their Troubles. When they have been under many Afflictions and are brought into great Perplexity, there are Predictions, which may support them: AFFLICTIONS are of two Kinds, Temporal, and Spiritual: I. Of temporal Afflictions particularly. 1. By the Death of Children. 2. The Death of Husbands. 3. The Loss of dear and useful Friends. 4. The Falling under false Accusations, with the Predictions which may afford Relief under such Sorrows. II. Of Spiritual Troubles particularly. 1. Of an habitual Despondence. 2. Of the Anguish and Distress of the Soul, after the Commission of some heinous Sin. 3. Of the great Troubles and Sorrow occasioned by the violent Temptations, and Assaults of the Devil.



HERE are Times of great Afflictions and Distress even with serious Christians; and there are Predictions in the Holy Scriptures, which may relieve, and comfort their sorrowful Hearts: Blessed be our Compassionate God for them!

Sometimes

Sometimes Afflictions come quick, one after another, and are of long Continuance, and the Troubles are great, and the Aspect of Providence seems to threaten greater.

They are under thick Darkneſs, reduced to great Extremity, and they can ſee no Way in which Deliverance can come to them; and they are ready almoſt to give up their Hope.

Yet in ſuch a diſmal Time as this, there are Predictions proper for their Support and Comfort.

For in Iſa. xli. 17. we read theſe Words, *I the LORD will bear them, I the God of Iſrael will not forſake them*: that is, thoſe who are his People, he will not forſake: Comfortable Predictions ~~his~~ *ſide*! And in many Places God has promiſed to deliver his People.

And may not ſerious Chriſtians think that with God, their own God, all Things are poſſible; and may they not think he has Bowels of Pity, as well as boundleſs Power?

May they not pray? May they not ſay to their Father which is in Heaven? O my Father! Thou art the mighty God, which doth great Things paſt finding out, yea, and Wonders without Number.

Have they not Leave to pour out their Complaints before Him? may they not ſay?

Conſider all my ſorrows, Lord,
And thy Deliverance ſend;
My Soul for thy Salvation faints,
When will my Troubles end?

Yet have I found, 'tis good for me
To bear my Fathers Rod,
Afflictions make me learn thy Law,
And live upon my God.

I know thy Judgments, Lord, are right,
Tho' they may ſeem ſevere;

The sharpest Sufferings I endure,
Flow from thy faithful Care.

WATTS'S Psalms 119.

O my merciful God, purge away the Dross
of my Sin from my Soul, by thy Chastisements;
and forgive, and save thy Servant that trusteth in
Thee!

True; to an Eye of Sense, my Deliverance appears as a Thing impossible; and thus appeared the Deliverance of the Children of Israel, when they had the Sea just before them, and their Enemies just behind them: And thus did appear the Deliverance of Abraham from his agonizing Trial, when his Arm was lifted up to slay his Son, and the only Son of the Promise, as a Sacrifice to God; and yet thou didst deliver the Children of Israel, and didst deliver Abraham in the last Extremity, and thou canst deliver me, May I not say?

Oft in the last distressing Hour
The Lord displays delivering Power,
The Mount of Sorrows is the Place,
Where we shall see surprizing Grace.

WATTS.

Why then art thou cast down, O my Soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet Praise him, who is the Health of my Countenance and my God. Psal. xlii. 11.

Our good God in his Predictions has provided for the Comfort of his People, under the various Afflictions wherewith they may be exercised.

The Afflictions incident to Christians, are either of a Temporal, or of a Spiritual Nature; I shall briefly take notice of both Sorts.

I. Of the Afflictions of a temporal Kind, these are many, but I shall take notice of some that are very frequent; particularly the following.

1. If their Children die, they may consider that there is a Name better than of Sons and of Daughters, which God hath foretold that he will give to them that keep his Sabbaths, and choose the Things that please him, and take hold of his Covenant. *That he will give them an everlasting Name, that shall not be cut off.* Isa. lv. 4, 5.

Serious Christians under the Loss of their little Ones, may take Comfort as David did, by considering that although their Children cannot return to be with them again in this World; yet, that they shall in a little Time, go to be with them in the other World; and they should imitate David's Example, and instead of secreting themselves, and indulging an unreasonable Grief, they should give their Bodies all needful Refreshment, and go to the House of God and worship him in the Seasons of it; whose Providence wisely and rightly manageth all Things.

2. When Husbands die, our compassionate God has provided for the Comfort of the Widows, and of their fatherless Children.

In Jer. xlix. 11. God says, *Leave thy Fatherless Children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy Widows trust in me.* These Words plainly imply a Prediction, that God will take care of, and provide for the Fatherless and the Widows.

In Psal. lxviii. 5. it is said, *A Father of the Fatherless, and a Judge of the Widows is God in his Holy Habitation.* These Words signify a Prediction that God will defend and provide for the Widows, and their fatherless Children.

And the Consideration of these Predictions may well comfort the Minds, and rejoice the Hearts

of serious Christians in such an afflicted Condition ; and more especially as the divine Providence is always fulfilling the Predictions recorded in the Sacred Scriptures.

In Exod. xxii. 22. God says, *Ye shall not afflict any Widow, or fatherless Child.* And to enforce this Law, he adds, *If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me ; I will surely bear their Cry, and my Wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the Sword, and your Wives shall be Widows, and your Children fatherless,* ver. 23, 24.

These awful Threatnings should not only make all Men afraid of injuring the Fatherless and Widows ; but excite all Men to shew them Kindness as there may be Occasion ; because their doing so will be pleasing to God, as may well be concluded from the aforementioned Law, enforced with such terrible Threatnings against the Transgressors of it.

3. Serious Christians may likewise be in great Affliction by the Death of dear and useful Friends, who were a principal Support and Comfort to them : Or if not by their Death, yet by their ceasing to be Friends, and sometimes by their becoming Enemies.

A Christian thus afflicted, may take Comfort in considering, that although earthly Friends die, yet their Father which is in Heaven lives for ever ; and can, and often doth raise up new Friends in their stead, and more useful than those they have lost : Or if God suffers our Friends to forsake us, he teaches us never to trust in Man, *Nor in an Arm of Flesh.*

This Affliction befel David, as appears from what he says, in Psal. lv. ver. 12, 13, 14. *For it was not an Enemy that reproached me, then I could have born it ; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have*

have hid myself from him; but it was thou, a Man mine equal, my Guide and my Acquaintance: We took sweet Counsel together, and walked unto the House of God in company.

David very plainly suffered much Grief, by the Behaviour and Reproaches of his Friends; but under such a Trouble, there are Predictions, which may administer Comfort to our Minds. For it is said, *The Lord thy God is a merciful God, he will not forsake thee.* (No, although worldly Friends may do so,) *but with everlasting Kindness will I have Mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer.* Isa. liv. 8.

4. Serious Christians may also be in great Affliction by false Accusations.

It was the Case of David. *False Witnesses did rise up; they laid to my Charge, Things that I knew not, was his Complaint.* Psal. xxxv.

II.

But against Trouble by such vile Treatment, that Prediction in Psal. xxxvii. 5, 6. viz. *Commit thy Way (and thy Cause) unto the LORD; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass: And he shall bring forth thy Righteousness as the Light, and thy Judgment as the noon Day.*

His Providence will make thy Innocence appear clearly; therefore rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.

Some of the Troubles, which our glorious Redeemer went through for our Sakes, were false Accusations, bitter Reproaches, and perverse Misinterpretations of his kindest Actions. He long endured the Contradiction of Sinners against himself, even through the whole Course of his Life. And exercised perfect Meekness and Patience, under all Indignities and malicious Treatment; and from his Example we should learn to exercise Patience and Meekness, and endeavour

deavour to behave as he did, under the cruel Behaviour of those who should have received him as their best Friend and Saviour, and who should have rejoiced in him, and fervently loved him.

II. Afflictions of a spiritual Nature are various : I shall only mention the Three following, *viz.*

1. An habitual Despondency or Despair, from the Disease of the Body called *Melancholy*. This needs Medicines till the Disorder of the Body is removed.

2. Anguish, and Distress of the Soul, after the Commission of some heinous Sin.

This was the Case of David after his Sin in the Matter of Uriah. (2 Sam. chap. xi. 12.) His Guilt was great, and great was the Grief, and Remorse of his Soul on that Account. The Fifty first Psalm, was written as a publick penitent Confession to the World of his complicated Crime, and to express his deep Contrition, and doubtless, to preserve in his Conscience a Self-loathing Remembrance of it.

The Psalm is a very mournful Supplication to God, on the Account of those Transgressions ; and several of the Petitions shew that his Sorrow was long and grievous ; so great that they could not be fully expressed.

But we may form some Idea of his Sorrows from his Petitions, *viz.*

Have Mercy upon me, O God, according to thy Loving-kindness ; according to the Multitude of thy tender Mercies, blot out my Transgressions : Wash me thoroughly from mine Iniquity, and cleanse me from my Sin : For I acknowledge my Transgressions, and my Sin is ever before me : Make me to hear Joy and Gladness ; that the Bones, which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy Face from my Sins ; and blot out
all

all mine Iniquities : Create in me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me : Cast me not away from thy Presence ; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me : Restore unto me the Joy of thy Salvation ; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. A broken and a contrite Heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Great was the Anguish, and Distress of his Soul ! And so it was after he had committed the Sin of numbring the People. 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. After the Thing was done, *Davids Heart smote him ; and David said unto the LORD, I have sinned in that I have done : And now I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the Iniquity of thy Servant, for I have done very foolishly.*

And how much greater must be the Horror of his Mind, when the Lord expressed his Anger against him ? And put three dreadful Things to his Choice, *viz. seven Years Famine, or to flee three Months before his Enemies, while they pursued him ; or to have three Days Pestilence in his Land : As he chose the Pestilence, ver. 15. So the LORD sent the Pestilence upon Israel in the Morning, even to the Time appointed, that is for three Days.*

Who can imagine the Anguish and Distress of his Soul during those three long Days ? But somewhat of it is discovered by those Heart-piercing Words, which he spoke to the merciful God on the third Day, ver. 17. *David spake unto the LORD, when he saw the Angel that smote the People, and said, lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly ; but these Sheep, what have they done ? Let thine Hand, I pray thee, be against me, and my Father's House.*

The Words discover not only great Humanity, and a tender Regard to the Welfare of his Subjects,

jects, but also that he was long under agonizing Sorrow.

O it is a dreadful Thing to provoke the Anger of the holy and righteous God!

But as God is just, so he is merciful! And how soon was his Compassion manifested to David? For the Prophet Gad, that same Day, came to David, and directed him to rear up an Altar unto the *Lord* in the Threshing-floor of Araunah.

He did so, and offered burnt Offerings, and peace Offerings to the LORD, *And the Lord was intreated for the Land, and the Plague was stayed from Israel.* ver. 25.

The Apostle Peter had like Distress, and Anguish of Soul, after he had denied his Master and his Saviour: When he had done it, he remembered the Words of Jesus, who foretold him of it, *And went out, and wept bitterly.* Matt. xxvi. 75.

We have need to watch and pray, lest we fall into Temptation, and are overcome by it.

3. Another Sort of spiritual Troubles, arise from the violent Temptations and Assaults of the Devil.

The Devil will give no Disturbance to his own Servants and Children, who voluntarily do his Will, and run on in the broad Way of Sin, which leads down to everlasting Destruction. It gives him a Pleasure to see the Generality of People continuing their Rebellion against the holy God, and going on boldly in a Course of wilful Disobedience to his Authority, and his Law.

It pleases him to see the Places where the Gospel is preached, thin of People, and the Assemblies for sensual Delights crouded: To see such Multitudes eagerly pursuing the Pleasures of Sense at great Expence, and at the Hazard of their

Health : Or else labouring with all their Might, early and late, for the Meat that perishes, and for the Riches of this World, which may make themselves Wings and fly away : Or indefatigable in using all Ways and Means to obtain Honours among Men, to the intire Neglect of the Welfare, the Safety, the Salvation and Happiness of their immortal Souls. These People do as the Devil would have them do ; they please their infernal Master, and will be with him in the next World, in Torments, which will never end, except they hearken to the merciful Calls of the Gospel.

O merciful God ! Look down with Pity on these miserable People ! They are dead, dead in their Trespasses and Sins, and are as insensible of their Guilt, and Wretchedness, and Danger as a dead Body is insensible of Pain. Lord by thy Holy Spirit do thou quicken them ! Make Multitudes of them Converts from Sin and Satan. Have not many of thy Saints been such as these ? For the Apostle, after he had declared to the Saints at Corinth, that *Neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Abusers of themselves with Mankind, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners shall inherit the Kingdom of God.* He said unto them, *And such were some of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.

O my Father which art in Heaven ! Will it not be a glorious Display of the Riches of thy Grace, if thou shalt send down thy Holy Spirit, and awaken the Consciences of Multitudes of these unhappy Creatures, and bring them to repent of their Sins, and by Faith unfeigned with Joy to accept of thy beloved Son to save them ?

O my good God, once I was as regardless of the State of my Soul, and of an Interest in Christ, as any of these, and was dead in Sin as these are; but thou hadst Mercy on me, and broughtest me to be sensible of my Want of a Saviour, and didst convince me that Christ only could redeem me; thy Holy Spirit did set the loving Jesus before me, as both able, and willing to save me: Blessed for ever be thy holy Name for that Grace which brought me to be one of Christ's Disciples! O gracious God, extend that Mercy to these miserable People, which thou didst shew to me! Will they not rejoice in thy Loving-kindness, and labour to promote that Gospel which many of them have been endeavouring to destroy? Lord glorify thy great Name, by subduing them to thyself!

But although the Devil suffers wilful Sinners to go on in their evil Ways, without disturbing their Minds; YET when he finds the holy God working in the Souls of any of them, he bestirs himself to hinder it as much as possible, and pursues them with his fiery Darts, and many Times they have dreadful Conflicts with this grand Enemy of their Salvation.

But Christ, who is in them by his Spirit, is stronger than all the Principalities and Powers of Darkeness.

When Satan makes his Assaults on Christians, in the Beginning of their new Life, does sometimes repeat them with great Violence: He is always watching Opportunities of presenting his Temptations, to make them neglect Duty, or to do Things, which God has forbidden them.

And therefore a Christian's Life is compared to a WARFARE; and the Disciples of Christ are informed of this in the holy Scriptures, and instructed

fructed how to manage it; particularly, in Eph. vi. 10—17. Where the Apostle says to them, *My Brethren be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might. Put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the Wiles of the Devil. For we wrestle not (only) against (the Lusts of) Flesh and Blood, but against Principalities, against Powers, against the Rulers of the Darknes of this World, against spiritual Wickedness in high Places: Wherefore take unto you the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil Day, and having done all to stand: Stand therefore, having your Loins girt about with Truth, and having on the Breast-plate of Righteousness: And your Feet shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace: Above all, taking the Shield of Faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery Darts of the Wicked. (one) And take the Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.*

The Enemies, which serious Christians must encounter with, are very subtle, very potent and very malicious. There is no avoiding them, when God permits them to assault us: We must resist, we must fight, and we must conquer them, or be overcome and perish by them. No wonder then, that distressing Fears do sometimes arise in the Minds of pious Persons.

But there are Predictions in the holy Scriptures, which may animate our Hope, excite our Courage, and administer Consolation to our Souls, when under strong Temptations.

In the 1 Cor. x. 11. it is said, *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the Temptation also make a Way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* A most comfortable Prediction this! And may help

us against our Fears, and revive our Hope, when the Devil continues urging his Temptations strongly upon us, and we are afraid of being overcome by them.

In Rom. viii. 37. After the Apostle had mentioned some of the Trials of true Believers, as in Tribulation, Distress, Persecution, Famine, Nakedness, Perils and Sword, he says, *In all these Things we are (and shall be) more than Conquerors, through him that loved us.* The Words imply a Prediction, that God will not suffer sincere Christians to be overcome by the Enemies of their Souls, but that through Christ, who loved them, they shall be made victorious over all their Adversaries: And it teaches us to look to Christ the Captain of our Salvation, and to depend on him for Success in our Warfare.

St. Peter says, 2 Pet. ii. 9. *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of Temptations.* Which Words plainly imply a Prediction that the Lord will deliver the Godly out of Temptations; because otherwise the Declaration is no ground of Comfort to the Saints.

In Rom. xvi. 20. The Apostle says to the Saints at Rome, and to the Saints in all Places, and Ages; *And the God of Peace shall bruise (or treat) Satan under your Feet shortly.* Here is a Prediction signifying, that although the Saints for a while are tempted and assaulted by the Devil, yet that God in due Time, will subdue the Devil under them, and make them victorious over him.

These Promises may well encourage us to continue a vigorous Opposition to all his Attacks, remembering that it is said, *Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.* James iv. 7.

The Christian in the Day of Temptation, should do as the Apostle did, when, *There was given*

given to him a Thorn in the Flesh, the Messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above Measure. 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 9. He fought by Prayer to his Lord and Master, the glorious Captain of his Salvation, for Help and Deliverance. *For this Thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.* ver. 8. And he did not pray in vain; for the Lord returned this gracious Answer to his Petition, saying, *My Grace is sufficient for thee; for my Strength is made perfect in weakness.*

The Grace of the Lord Jesus was sufficient to support the Apostle all the Time of his Trial, and to release him from it, when it should be fit to do it; and the Strength of Christ is manifest in sustaining his weak Disciples, and in making them Conquerors over their most powerful Enemies: And what was the Apostle's Resolution upon receiving so gracious an Answer to his Prayers? He tells us, saying, *Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my Infirmities, that the Power of Christ may rest upon me.*

The Consideration that the Power of Christ resteth upon Believers, may well reconcile them to endure Hardships in their spiritual Warfare, as becometh good Soldiers of the blessed Jesus, and may keep them from being discouraged, by the Thoughts of their own Weakness and Infirmities.

The serious Christian in the Hour of Temptation, should go to the Throne of Grace, and present his Petitions for Support, for Help, and Deliverance.

We should look to our great Redeemer, and may say to him, Lord didst thou not come into the World to destroy the Works of the Devil? And didst thou not thyself suffer being tempted? O pity me now, being sorely distressed by the
Assaults

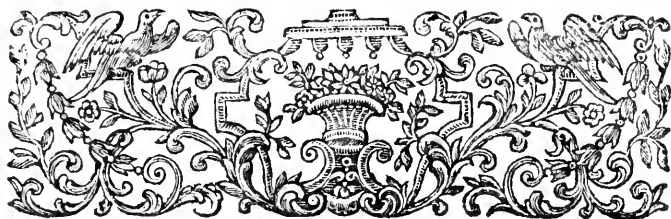
Affaults and Buffetings of Satan! For thou art a compassionate Saviour, and art able to succour them that are tempted: O merciful Jesus help me, and rebuke the Devil, and command him to cease his Suggestions: Thy Grace is sufficient for me, and thy Strength is made perfect in Weakness; and thou knowest my Weakness, O communicate Strength to me, and make the Enemy of my Soul to fly from me.

My God, the Prince of Darknes tries
All his malicious Arts;
He spreads a Mist before my Eyes,
And throws his fiery Darts.

Be thou my Sun, and thou my Shield,
My Soul in Safety keep;
My Foes will fly at thy Command,
And Satan hide his Head.

Thou wilt display that sovereign Grace,
Where all my Hopes have hung;
I shall employ my Lips in praise,
And Victory shall be sung.

WATTS'S Psal. p. 34.



LETTER VII.

On the Predictions relative to sincere Christians, from the Time of their Death. Particularly :

1. *It is predicted that at Death, their Souls shall be made perfect in Holiness. What is communion with God, explained.*
2. *That their Bodies shall remain under the Care of Christ after Death.*
3. *That their Bodies will be raised to life again; and also the Bodies of the Wicked.*
4. *That the Soul of every Believer at Death, will be put into another Building for its Habitation.*
5. *That the Souls of Believers immediately after Death, will be with Christ.*
6. *That the Time of the general Resurrection will be very solemn, magnificent, and awful. Of the CHANGE, that will be made in the Bodies of those, who shall be living at the Time of the general Resurrection. And that it will make their Bodies incorruptible and immortal.*

Lastly. It is predicted that the Saints shall have an Inheritance, but not be put into the Possession of it, till the Day of Judgment — — A Kingdom seems to be the Inheritance promised to them; and as suitable to such an Inheritance, it is foretold, that they shall have a Crown of Righteousness, and a

Crown.

in Crown of Life; and it is predicted, that they shall reign, reign ~~in~~ Life by Jesus Christ.

L PROCEED now to consider the sacred Predictions, relative to sincere Christians from the Time of their Death: And the wonderful Love of God towards them, appears gloriously in those which shall be mentioned, as well as in those which have been considered.

Great are the Felicities purchased by the blessed Jesus, and intended for his Disciples: We can have no adequate Notions of them, while we remain in this Vale of Tears, in a State mixed with Sin and Sorrow.

As it is written, *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man, the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* 1 Cor. ii. 9. They are so many, so great, so glorious that we cannot comprehend them.

The Apostle adds, *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.* ver. 10. God, has though not fully, yet in a comfortable Measure made them known in his Word, by his Spirit.

And what he has revealed, we should endeavour to understand, especially as to the following Particulars.

I. That at Death, the Souls of Believers are made perfect in Holiness.

The Apostle calls the Souls of true Believers after Death, *The Spirits of just Men made perfect.* Heb. xii. 23.

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We may from these Words observe, that although in this World, there is some Remainder of sinful Corruptions in the best of Christians, some Imperfection or other, yet at Death every Imperfection is done away, and the Souls of the Righteous are then made perfectly Holy.

How the Holy Spirit compleats the Sanctification of true Believers, we know not, and it is not needful for us to know the Manner of his Operation: But it is sufficient for us to know that at Death, the glorious Work will be perfected; and the Revelation of this Truth, hath the Signification of Prediction, that it shall be so with the Souls of all sincere Christians at Death in every Age: And the Thoughts of it, may well rejoice our Hearts. Here our Minds are frequently disturbed by sinful Thoughts and Inclinations rising in us, and when we would do good, evil is often present with us; and the Good, that we would do, we do not, and the Evil that we would not do, we do. It is Matter of Grief that our Obedience is mixed with Multitudes of Sins, both of Omision and Commission; and that our best Services, even our Performances of religious Worship, are polluted with a Mixture of Sin: It is Matter of Grief that we meet with many Temptations from the Persons we converse with, and from the alluring Things of the World, and from the Suggestions of the Devil; and therefore it is a ground of Comfort, that we shall Sin no more after Death, nor meet with Temptations of any kind: Then there will be no Hindrance to our Communion with our God and Saviour, and no Interruption in it.

Serious Christians daily have Communion with God here: But what is Communion with God? And when may I think that I enjoy it?

These are weighty Questions, and it helps me to form right Answers to them, when I consider that I may be said to have Communion with, and the Enjoyment of a beloved Friend, when we are present together, and I am speaking to him, and he to me alternately; when there is a mutual Converse between my Friend and me.

And thus it is in the Time of religious Worship in Publick, in the Family and in secret: In the publick Worship, when the Word of God is read, or any Part of it is discoursed on by a Minister of Christ, then God is speaking to us: And when the Minister as the Mouth of the christian Assembly present, offers up Prayers, and Supplications, and Praises to God, with Confession of Sin, and thankful Acknowledgment of divine Mercies, then we are speaking to God, and thus there is a mutual Converse, or Communion between God and his People.

Not that every Person present in the Assembly has the blessed Enjoyment of God: No; they whose Thoughts are wandring after a thousand Vanities in the Time of divine Service, who neither regard what the Lord speaketh by the Word read, or preached, nor what is spoken to the Lord, in the solemn Addresses at the Throne of Grace: These have no Communion with God.

But those serious Christians, who are very attentive to the Word of God which they hear, and whose Souls say Amen to the several Things spoken to God in the Name of Christ, may be said to have Communion with God, in the Ordinances of his publick Worship.

And this may help us to understand, when a Christian has Communion with God, in the Seasons of Family, and of secret Worship.

I may add that a serious Christian has Communion with God, and Fellowship with Christ, not

only in the stated Times of religious Worship, but occasionally, and often between those happy Seasons.

When we are abroad, or at home, when we are alone, or in company, if God by his Holy Spirit brings some good Word of his to our Remembrance, for our Guidance, Edification and Comfort; or speaks to us by his Providence, producing merciful Events for our Advantage, thereby calling us to immediate thankful Acknowledgments and Praise; or speaks to us by afflictive Events, which fill us with Grief, and bring us sometimes into great Perplexity, which excite us to cry to the Lord in Distress, that he would support and deliver us: If at such Time, our Souls are attentive to the Voice of God speaking to us, and suitable Ejaculations of Thanks and Praise, or of humble Supplications ascend from us to our Father which is in Heaven, suitably to what the Lord speaketh by his Word, or by his Providence, there is then a Communion between God and us.

And such Communion shall Christians frequently have, who walk closely with God. They are short indeed, but very comfortable, and conduce much to preserve us in a holy Frame.

II. It is revealed in the holy Scriptures, that the Bodies of true Believers, are under the Care of Christ after Death, to the Resurrection of the Dead.

In John vi. 39. Christ says, *This is the Father's Will, which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last Day.* That is, raise up the Body. These Words plainly shew, that the Father hath committed the Bodies of those that are given to Christ, to the Care of Christ, and by him to be raised up from the Dead at the last Day.

And thus they are a Prediction that Christ will do so. In ver. 44. Christ says, *And I will raise him up at the last Day.* i. e. The Body of every one that cometh to him by true Faith.

It must be observed, that the *same* Bodies of the Saints, which die are to be raised again: Christ does not say, I will create new Bodies at the End of the World, in which the Souls of my Disciples shall dwell, but that identical Body, which the Soul of a Believer is taken from, at Death shall be raised again.

It seems hence a just Conclusion, that there are certain Parts of Matter in every human Body, which as fixed *Stamina* abide always the same, and a certain Modification, or Construction of them, peculiar to each individual Body, by which it is distinguished from all others, and become an individual Body.

By Death the original *Stamina* are separated, the Union of them dissolved, and their Construction pulled to pieces.

As if a prudent Man for some good Reasons should take his House to pieces, and carefully preserve the Materials, and after some Time should put them together, and in the same Form in which they were before the House was pulled down. It may very fitly be called the same House.

In somewhat similar Manner, the Materials of the Bodies of each dead Saint, are preserved by the Care of the mighty Jesus, and at the Resurrection, the separated Parts of each individual Body, are collected and united to the forming each identical Body, which it was before Death.

How the separate Parts are brought so together, I know not, but it is easy to an omnipotent Being, with whom all Things are possible.

In 1 Thes. iv. 14. It is said, *Even so, them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.* This is spoken of the Bodies of true Believers; for their Souls never sleep, but are happily with Christ, and active in their Enjoyment of Him, where he is: It is the Body therefore that sleeps, and the Time which passes between the Death of the Body, and its being raised to Life again in the Morning of the Resurrection, will seem as nothing: As does the Time that passes between a Man's falling asleep at Night, and remains sleeping, till the Morning.

The Bodies of the Saints being spoken of as sleeping in Jesus, lets us know that their Bodies are under his special Care; which likewise is implied in the Prediction, *That he will raise them up, at the last Day.*

And the Consideration of this Truth, may be a Means of Comfort to serious Christians, and contribute to abate the Fears of Death.

III. It is predicted that the Bodies of true Believers shall be raised to Life again, and likewise the Bodies of the Wicked: This is evident from those Words of the Lord Jesus already mentioned.

In Rom. viii. 11. It is said, *If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the Dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the Dead, shall also quicken your mortal Bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

In many Places of the holy Scripture, the Resurrection of Mens Bodies again to Life is manifestly predicted. The Bodies both of the Righteous, and of the Wicked, will be made to live again.

The Hour is coming in the which, all (both good and bad) that are in the Graves, shall hear his Voice,

Voice, (that is, the Voice of the Son of God,) and shall come forth, they that have done Good, unto the Resurrection of Life; and they that have Evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation; said our great Redeemer. In John v. 28, 29.

Some of the Dead will be awakened from the Sleep of Death, or raised up to everlasting Life, and some to Shame and everlasting Contempt.

There will be a vast Difference between the State of the Bodies of sincere Christians, and that of the Unbelieving, and Disobedient after the Resurrection, in the last Day.

The Saints in their first believing on the Lord Jesus, *Yielded themselves unto God, as those that were alive from the Dead, and their Members as Instruments of Righteousness unto God.* According to the Commandment, in Rom. vi. 13.

And as the dead Bodies of Believers during the Time of their Life here, were faithful Servants to their Souls, always acting according to the Determination of their Wills, carrying them to the Places of divine Worship; and were Instruments of Righteousness, and happy Instruments in the Performance of all Duties required by the Gospel; so at the Resurrection, when these same Bodies shall be raised up, and their immortal Spirits, their former Inhabitants are again put into them; then will they become Partakers of the good Things, which God has prepared for, and will bestow on those who love, and serve him.

In like manner, when the Bodies of the Wicked shall be raised up out of their Graves, and their guilty, their accursed, and condemned Spirits shall again enter into, and be united with them; then the wretched Bodies which instead of serving their Souls, in being Instruments of Righteousness, did by their sinful Lustings enslave their Souls, and carried them into Harlots Houses, or

to seek other sinful Pleasures, or hurry them to practise Things, or to perform Actions which the holy God has forbidden; then will those filthy Bodies reunited with their former wicked Inhabitants become Partakers with them of the same everlasting Torments.

The Unbelievers willingly suffered Sin to reign in their mortal Bodies, and obeyed it in the Lusts thereof. They yielded their Members as Instruments of Unrighteousness unto Sin. Both their Souls and Bodies were the willing Servants of Sin, while they lived together in this World, and therefore after the Resurrection, they will together suffer endless Tortures and Miseries.

But the Bodies of the Saints will have a glorious Resurrection. The Apostle Paul foretells that the Saviour; *The Lord Jesus Christ will change our vile Body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the Working whereby he is able even to subdue all Things unto himself.* Phil. iii. 20, 21.

And in 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43. The Apostle speaking of the Body at Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead, says, *It (that is, the Body at Death,) is sown in Corruption, it is (to be) raised in Incorruption: It is sown in Dishonour, it is (to be) raised in Glory: It is sown in Weakness, it is (to be) raised in Power.* These are comfortable Predictions!

Holy Job comforted himself, with the Consideration of the Certainty of the Resurrection of the Dead: The Truth of which God revealed to him: It was a Cordial to his Soul bowed down under complicated Afflictions, and full of Grief and Anguish. Job xix. 23. He says, *Oh that my Words were now written, Oh that they were printed in a Book! That they were graven with an Iron Pen and Lead, in the Rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at*
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the latter Day upon the Earth: And though after my Skin, Worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh shall I see God, (my Redeemer,) whom I shall see for myself, and mine Eyes shall behold, and not another; though my Reins be consumed within me.

What this just Man said, by the Inspiration of the Almighty, ought to be esteemed a Prediction of the Resurrection of the Bodies of the Saints, and signifying that those same Bodies, which were dead and buried, should be raised to Life again.

It was revealed to him, that there was a Redeemer, and that this Redeemer will appear at the last Day.

And they signify a Prediction, that every Saint at the Resurrection, should with their own Eyes behold the blessed Saviour, and with their Souls and Bodies be admitted to the Enjoyment of God.

And we may take Comfort in the Consideration of these Truths.

IV. It seems predicted that God will put the Soul of every true Believer at Death, into *another Building* for its Habitation, instead of its natural Body.

The Apostle Paul says, *We know that if the earthly House of this Tabernacle were dissolved, (that is, dead,) we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.* 2 Cor. v. 1.

1. Here it may be observed, that the Body of a Man is called a House, and it may be so called, because it is the Habitation of the Soul, in which it dwelleth here till Death.

2. It is called *our earthly House*, and it may be so called, because the Materials of it are earthy: Man, as to his Body being made of the Earth.

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3. The Body of a Man is also called a *Tabernacle*; and very fitly, because as a Tabernacle, whose Materials are slight, is soon taken down; so the Body of a Man is easily destroyed, and taken down.

4. That the Apostle speaketh of *two* Habitations appointed for the Souls of Believers to reside in, *viz.* the natural Body called the *earthly House*, and another Building different from it; and to distinguish it from the natural Body, the Apostle calls it a *Building of God*; and he calls it an House, as the Soul of a Believer is to have his Residence in it after Death; and it is called an House not made with Hands, *q. d.* not made with the Hands of Men.

5. We may observe, that the heavenly Building intended for the Habitation of the Soul, is called an House eternal in the Heavens: Our Bodies, these earthly Houses, have their Situation only on this Earth, till the Great and last Day, [the Day of the general Resurrection;] but our other Houses, called the Building of God, have their Situation not on Earth, but in the Heavens.

We know that if the earthly House of this Tabernacle were dissolved, (in Death,) we have a Building of God. The Words plainly imply, that God has made and provided another House, into which the Soul will be removed as soon as the earthly House of this Tabernacle is dissolved, and in which it will dwell not on Earth, but in the Heavens.

There is no Reason to think that this Building of God, (this House not made with Hands,) was intended for the Soul after the Resurrection, and not before; for at the Resurrection, the Soul is to be received again into its own natural and identical Body.

In Verse 2. the Apostle says. *For in this Tabernacle, (of our natural Body,) we groan earnestly, (on the Account of our Sins, and Afflictions, and Troubles, and the Impediments of our more intimate Enjoyment of God, and therefore) desiring to be clothed upon with our House, which is from Heaven.*

We desire at Death to be removed into those Houses, which have their Situation in the Heavens, and in which we shall be perfectly free from all Temptation, from all Sin, and from all Sorrow, and shall have a more full Enjoyment of our God and Saviour.

Serious Christians have the gracious Presence of God, and an Enjoyment of him, even while their Souls remain in their earthly Houses, according to the gracious Promises of their heavenly Father: And Christ is present with his Disciples, even while they remain on Earth; and not only when two or three of them are met together in his Name, according to his Word, but when they are alone, speaking to him by Petitions or Thanksgivings, and he is speaking to them, by his Word and Spirit.

But there is so great a Difference in the Degrees of enjoying God, which believing Souls are admitted to when they are resident in those Buildings, which God has made for them situated in the Heavens; that their Enjoyment of God here, is very little in Comparison with what the Saints are Partakers of in the Heavens: On which Account they may in a comparative Sense, be said to be absent from the Lord, while in this World, and to be present with him, when they are resident in their Houses, which are in the Heavens.

Whether the Souls of the Wicked at Death, will be put into other Habitations, I will not determine; very likely they may; but then it is certain,

tain, that their new Habitations will not be eternal in the Heavens: No; but they will be situated among the Devils, who are reserved to the Day of Judgment.

They will have long Time in their new Houses, (separated from all Things, that were pleasant to them in this World,) they will have long Time in them to consider, for how short a Space they enjoyed their merry Companions, their Diversions and Pleasures, or eager Pursuits, after Riches, or Honours, before Death fetched them away; and to consider for what Trifles, and Vanities, (which endure but for a very little while,) they lost the Salvation of their Souls, and all the solid Blessings, Joys, and Glories, fit to give Delight to rational Minds, and which will never fade, and never end. They will have Time to consider, that they are under the same Condemnation with the Devils, and that although they will not have their full Punishment till the Day of Judgment, when they and the Devils together, will be cast into the Lake of Fire, (which indeed, is like to be very many thousand Years distant,) yet that through this exceeding long Duration, they are miserable beyond Expression, and their active Minds, will reflect on their Sins and Stubborness, in refusing to accept of Christ, as their Saviour and their King: Then they will remember their aggravated Iniquities, and their Obstinacy in refusing to comply with the kind Invitations of the Gospel.

Then they will perpetually feel the Reproaches of a Self-accusing, and Self-condemning Conscience, and find nothing to divert their tormenting Thoughts, nothing to mitigate, or abate the Horror of their Souls.

O that Persons negligent of Faith and Holiness, would think on these Things! *Now*, now while the LORD waits to be gracious: *Now*, while they

have Opportunity of believing in Christ, and becoming his true Disciples; and then they will be in a most safe and happy Condition.

O merciful God! Convert many of these Servants of Satan unto thyself, for Jesus Christ his Sake, Amen.

V. It is predicted, that the Souls of true Believers immediately after Death, will go to be with Christ, where he is.

In Philip. i. 23. The Apostle says, *I am in a Strait between two, having a desire to depart (out of this World, and out of this natural Body,) and to be with Christ, which is far better.*

The Words plainly shew, that the Souls of the Saints, when they are departed out of this World, do become present with Christ.

When the Souls of the Righteous are taken out of their natural Bodies, (which were confined to this Earth,) they are conducted into Houses not made with Hands, into Houses whose Situation is in the Heavens, and in which Houses they have abundantly more intimate Enjoyment of their God and Saviour.

Our blessed Redeemer, when he hung on the Cross, suffering Death as a Sacrifice for us, spoke thus to the penitent Thief, who was crucified with him. *Verily I say unto thee, to Day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.* Luke xxiii. 43. *g. d.* As soon as thy Soul departs from thy Body, it shall be with me in Paradise. But we must observe, that the Happiness which Christ promised to this believing, repenting Malefactor, was not peculiar to him, but what Christ vouchsafes to all who repent of their Sins, and believe in his Name.

In John xii. 26. The blessed Jesus says, *If any Man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my Servant be.*

These

These Words manifestly shew, that the Souls of true Believers are with Christ as soon as they depart from their dead Bodies; and this is an Evidence, that they are immediately happy after Death; for being with Christ they are safe from the Assaults of the Devil, and they are secure from the Temptations of the World, and the Flesh, and from all Sorrow and Grief; and have no Hindrances to their Communion with God and Christ, and the holy Angels, and the Spirits of just Men that went before them into Christ's more immediate Presence.

The Consideration hereof, may convince us, that there is solid Ground for that Declaration, in Eccles. vii. 1. *The Day of one's Death, is better than the Day of one's Birth.*

The Consideration of this Truth, may well abate our fears of Dying.

VI. It is predicted, that the Time of the general Resurrection will be very solemn, magnificent and awful; and followed with Events, most happy to sincere Christians.

Our blessed Redeemer says, *When the Son of Man shall come in his Glory, and all the holy Angels with him, then shall he sit upon the Throne of his Glory. And before him shall be gathered all Nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a Shepherd divideth his Sheep from the Goats: And he shall set the Sheep at his right Hand, and the Goats on the Left.* Mat. xxv. 31—33.

St. Paul says, *The Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Archangels, and with the Trump of God. And the Dead in Christ shall rise first.* 1 Theſ. iv. 16. And in 2 Theſ. i. 7. He declares, *That the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels.*

In Rev. xx. 11. &c. The general Resurrection, and the general Judgment that is to follow, are in Vision predicted thus, ver. 11. *I saw a great white Throne, and him that sat on it, from whose Face the Earth and the Heavens fled away, and there was no Place found for them. And I saw the Dead, small and great stand before God; and the Books were opened; and another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life: And the Dead were judged out of those Things, which were written in the Books, according to their Works. And Death and Hell, were cast into the Lake of Fire: This is the second Death. And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life, was cast into the Lake of Fire.*

In Regard to the general Resurrection of the Dead, I may observe two Things, viz.

1. That it will be sudden and unexpected; this is predicted.

Our blessed Redeemer says, *As the Days of Noah were, so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the Days, that were before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in Marriage, until the Day that Noah entered into the Ark, and knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be. Mat. xxiv. 37—39.*

And in Luke xvii. 28. *Likewise also as it was in the Days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: But the same Day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained Fire and Brimstone out of Heaven, and destroyed them all: Even thus shall it be in the Day when the Son of Man is revealed.*

2. It is foretold, that they, who shall be living at the Time of the Resurrection of the Dead, shall undergo a great Change in their Bodies.

Behold,

Behold, (says the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.) *I shew you a Mystery, we shall not all Sleep, but we shall all be CHANGED, IN A MOMENT, IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE, at the last Trump, (for the Trumpet shall sound) and the Dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

For the Right understanding of the wonderful Prediction contained in these Words; a few Things should be considered, *viz.*

1. That when the Apostle says, *We shall not all sleep*, (or die,) he did not mean, or speak of the People of that Generation, who were living at the Time he wrote his Epistle; for all the People of that, and the following Generations did die, and fell asleep in Death; but he spoke of the People of all Nations, in the Age, wherein the Resurrection should happen, that *they* should not all die. Which Interpretation agrees with the Account of our Saviour, who speaks of People marrying, and giving in Marriage; buying, selling, eating, and drinking, and planting, and building, when the Son of Man should come at the End of the World.

2. It is declared by the Apostle, that they, who shall be living (that is, at the Day of the general Resurrection) shall undergo, or experience a great, a wonderful CHANGE in their Bodies, which seems to be a Change equivalent to that, which had passed on the Bodies of those who had died, and been raised again from the Dead. And therefore,

3. That as the Bodies of those who had died, were raised *incorruptible*, and had put on Immortality; (ver. 52.) so the Bodies of those who shall be then living, shall have such a Change wrought in them

them, as shall render them *incorruptible, and immortal.*

4. We must observe, that this very great and wonderful Change will be surprizingly quick, *for it will be in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye:* The Apostle might well introduce this Prediction, with saying, *Behold, I shew you a Mystery:* That there will be such a Fact, is no Mystery after the Apostle had foretold it; but how this marvellous and instantaneous Change will be produced, is and will be a Mystery, that we cannot comprehend.

5. I may add, that the making the Bodies of those who shall be raised from the Dead, and of those who shall be living, *incorruptible and immortal,* will be an Event of vast Consequence, both to the Righteous, and to the Wicked.

For the Righteous by having their Bodies (which while they lived in this World, were corruptible and mortal, always liable to Diseases, Death, and Corruption) made *incorruptible and immortal,* will never more be liable to Sicknefs and Death. *There shall be no more Death.* Rev. xxi. 4. But they shall for ever be Partakers with their Souls of all the Blessings, of all the Glories and Joys, which Christ has purchased for his Disciples, and with them will enjoy our God and Saviour to all Eternity.

And it is implied that their Body thus raised, will be a Means of Comfort, and Felicity to them for ever: And as the Souls will have an Advantage from their Bodies, so will the Bodies receive Good by means of their Souls.

We know much of the Uses of the Body to the Soul in this World, but very little of the Uses of it to the Soul in the next World; when the Saints shall be equal to the Angels, when they shall
hunger

hunger no more, nor thirst any more: Only we may conclude, that then there will be reciprocal Advantages between them.

The Bodies of the *Wicked*, will also be raised *incorruptible* and *immortal*; and as such, each Body will have its own Soul united to it: But the Consequences of their Reunion, are like to be vastly different from those of the Righteous.

The Bodies and Souls of the Wicked after the Resurrection, will be joint Sufferers of Miseries and Torments, which no Tongue can express, and no Thought can conceive.

The Body and Soul instead of being mutual Comforts, are like to be Torments to each other, and that for ever. And from the Bodies of the Wicked being made *incorruptible* and *immortal*, it seems reasonable to conclude, that they are made capable of subsisting in Fire, and of bearing the Action and Pain of it for ever, without being consumed.

Doubtless the Almighty Power of God can give to the human Body such a Consistence: He preserved those Jews, *viz.* Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, in the Midst of a fiery Furnace. Dan. iii. 12. &c.

Their Preservation shews the Power of God; and the Consideration of it is very instructive: When these pious Jews were threatned by King Nebuchadnezzar to be cast into a burning fiery Furnace, if they would not worship the Idol he had set up: They like faithful Servants of the Most high God, replied, *If it be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery Furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine Hand, O King: But if not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy Gods, nor worship the golden Image, which thou hast set up.*

Hereupon the King, full of Rage and Fury, commanded they should heat the Furnace one seven Times more, than it was used to be heat.

Into this Furnace, those faithful Jews were cast bound, in their Coats, their Hoſen, and their Hats, and their other Garments.

And because the King's Commandment was urgent, and the Furnace exceeding hot, the Flame of the Fire ſlew thoſe Men that took up Shedrach, Meſhach, and Abednego: And they walked in the Miſt of the Fire, and had no Hurt. ver. 25.

Nebuchadnezzar, and the Princes, Governors, and the Captains, and the King's Counſellors, being gathered together, ſaw theſe Men, upon whoſe Bodies the Fire had no Power, nor was an Hair of their Head ſinged, neither were their Coats changed, nor the Smell of Fire had paſſed upon them. ver. 27.

We may here obſerve, that there were very many Eye-witneſſes of the Fact, that God preſerved theſe Men alive, and their Garments, and even the Hair of their Heads from being ſinged, while in the Miſt of the fierceſt Fire that could be made.

This Fact proves, that God can make even the *corruptible* and *mortal* Bodies of Men to live in the Miſt of Fire; and a Fire ſo ſtrong, that the Flames of it ſlew thoſe Men, who caſt Shedrach, Meſhach and Abednego into it.

And this is an Evidence, that God can make the *incorruptible* and *immortal* Bodies of the Wicked, to live in Fire everlaſtingly without being conſumed.

The Bodies of thoſe Jews, ſuffered no Pain from the Fire in which they walked; but it will not be ſo with the Bodies of the Wicked, when they ſhall be caſt into the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimſtone: They will there feel the Pains and Torments of the Fire for ever.

But

But if the Word *Fire*, (when mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, as Part of the Punishment of the Damned) be used as a Metaphor, it can administer no Relief or Comfort to the Wicked; because it imports that the Torments of the Damned are so exquisite, that no Words in Language, can convey adequate Ideas of them.

O that Men were wise, wise in Time to consider their latter End, and the Events, the horrible Events, they shall meet with after their Life in this World shall be ended, and after the Judgment of the great Day!

O merciful God, open the Eyes of careless Sinners to see their Danger, to be sensible of the Sinfulness, and Miserableness of their Condition; and to fly from that dreadful Wrath, that will be poured out on those who shall live and die in a Course of Unbelief, and Disobedience; and by the Working of thy holy Spirit prevail with them to fly from the Punishments threatned in thy righteous Law, by flying to Christ with a Faith unfeigned!

Sad, indeed, is the State of those, who are regardless of an Interest in Christ, and of Peace with God!

But glorious Things are predicted for true Believers after the general Resurrection. Particularly,

It is predicted, that Christ will own them in the Day of Judgment.

In Mat. x. 32. Christ says, *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before Men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in Heaven.* He will then own them to be his true Disciples, and faithful Servants.

In Rev. iii. 5. He says, *I will confess his Name, before my Father, and before his Angels.* He will do so in the great Day of Judgment, when all the holy Angels shall be present, and be Witnesses

of the righteous Conduct of the blessed Jesus sitting on his Throne judging all Nations, and every individual Person.

He will then own all true Believers, acquit them from all Guilt, and will confess they belong to him.

Many glorious Things are foretold of the Saints in the last Day, when their Saviour and their Judge will render to every Man according to his Works.

In the Time, when the Dead shall be judged, he will give Rewards to his Servants the Prophets, and to the Saints, and them that fear his Name, small and great. As we learn from Rev. xi. 18.

It is predicted, that they shall have an **INHERITANCE**: The Apostle Peter says, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively Hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, to an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you.* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

In Acts xx. 32. St. Paul says. *And now Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them which are sanctified.* Which shews that an Inheritance is appointed for all them that are, and that shall be sanctified.

And when he (in Acts xxvi. 18.) gave an Account of his Conversion, (from being a violent Persecutor of the Christians, to be himself a Christian, and made an Apostle of that Jesus, whose Disciples he was hunting after, to be cast into Prisons and punished,) to King Agrippa, and Porcius Festus the Governor, and a very august Assembly, addressing himself to King Agrippa, he said, *At Mid-day, O King, I saw in the Way, a Light from Heaven,*

ven, above the Brightness of the Sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me: And when we were all fallen to the Earth, I heard a Voice speaking unto me, and saying, in the Hebrew Tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the Pricks: And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But arise, and stand upon thy Feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this Purpose, to make thee a Minister, and a Witness of these Things which thou hast seen, and of those Things in the which I will appear unto thee: Delivering thee from the People, (the Jews) and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee: To open their Eyes, and to turn them (Gentiles) from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God, that they may receive Forgiveness of Sins, and INHERITANCE among them which are sanctified by the Faith that is in me.

Hence it appears, that an Inheritance was appointed for all who become sanctified by Faith in Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles.

And the Words imply a Prediction, that all that are sanctified shall have an Inheritance.

And we Christians, who are Descendants from the Sinners of the Gentiles, are under the greater Obligations to prize and love the blessed Jesus, for that compassionate Regard he shewed to the Gentile Nations, by appointing this Convert to be a Minister, and an Apostle to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, that their Eyes also might be opened, and they brought to believe in Christ, and receive Forgiveness of Sins, and an *Inheritance*, as well as the believing Jews. And we have Reason to be very thankful, that the holy Spirit has made the Preaching of the Gospel among the Gentiles, an effectual Means of Salvation, from the first preaching of it to this Day.

In Ephes. i. 11. The Apostle speaking of Christ, says, *In whom also we have obtained an Inheritance*: Not the actual Possession of it, but a Title to it.

In Colos. iii. 24. He says to the Saints, *Knowing that of the Lord, ye shall receive the Reward of the Inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ*. Which Words shew, that the Inheritance was not then in the Possession of the Saints, but that they shall surely have it in due Time: And likewise it will be given them as a Reward, although they deserve nothing. A Reward it will be, not of Debt but of Grace, the free Gift of God.

The Inheritance (so much spoken of in the Holy Scriptures,) is not to be possessed in this World; but serious Christians should pray for it, and hope for it, and bless God, that they have in themselves the Earnest of it.

The Apostle says, to the Saints at Ephesus, *After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise, which is the Earnest of our Inheritance, until the Redemption of the purchased Possession, unto the Praise of his Glory*. Ephes. i. 13, 14.

All sincere Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, and his Indwelling may be known to their Consciences, by observing his Fruits in their Souls; and this Indwelling of the Holy Spirit is an Earnest, that they shall hereafter be put into the Possession of the promised Inheritance.

It is a glorious Inheritance; but it cannot be enjoyed on Earth, No; it is reserved in Heaven for them: And at the Day of Judgment Christ will say unto them, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World*. Mat. xx. 34.

Christ (when sitting upon his Throne of Judgment,) will say to the Sheep on his right Hand,
(that

(that is, to all the Saints,) *Come ye Blessed—inheritor the Kingdom prepared for you; (which implies,) that a Kingdom is the Inheritance prepared for them.*

In Luke xii. 32. Christ says to his Disciples, to those who believed on him, *Fear not little Flock, for it is your Father's good Pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Not immediately, but at the Day of Judgment; when Christ shall say to them, Come, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you.*

The Apostle James says, *Hearken my beloved Brethren, hath not God chosen the Poor of this World, rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom, which God hath promised to them that love him. James ii. 6.*

And suitable to such an Inheritance, it is foretold, that they shall have a *Crown*; for 2 Tim. iv. 8. The Apostle says, *Henceforth there is laid up for me, a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give me at that Day, (the Day of Judgment,) and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

In Rev. ii. 10. Christ says, *Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.*

In James i. 12. It is said, *Blessed is the Man that endureth Temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive a Crown of Life, which the Lord hath promised to (all) them that love him.*

It is also predicted, that the Saints shall reign in Life, in Rom. v. 17. Where the Apostle says, *For if by one Man's Offence, Death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of Grace, and the Gift of Righteousness, shall reign in Life by one Jesus Christ.*

In Rev. xxii. 5. It is said, *They shall reign for ever and ever. That is, in the new Jerusalem. See the Context.*

In Heb. xii. 28. The Apostle speaking in the Name of all true Believers, says, *Wherefore we receiving (the Promise of) a Kingdom, which cannot be moved, let us have Grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with Reverence, and Godly Fear.*

From these Predictions it evidently appears, that all true Believers at the Day of Judgment, will receive from Christ their faithful Redeemer, and righteous Judge, an Inheritance; an Inheritance that fadeth not away; a Kingdom that shall not be moved, and a Crown of Righteousness, a Crown of Life, and shall reign in Life by our Lord Jesus Christ.

But who can describe the glorious Inheritance? Who can give an Account of the Nature, and Extent of the Kingdom which the Saints shall hereafter possess?

A Crown is a Sort of Cap, constructed with Jewels, and other costly Materials, which is set on the Heads of Kings, as a Badge or Sign of Majesty, Authority and Power: But the Crowns that will be given to the Heirs of God, when they shall receive the Kingdom prepared for them, will be no such material Ornament: But they will have Crowns more excellent and glorious: But who can explain them?

The Holy Scriptures have not unfolded these Things. Things of transcendent Value and Glory.

Eye hath not seen them, nor hath the Ear heard by any Revelation from God, what they are; nor is it possible for human Minds to form any certain Ideas of them.

We cannot live by Sight, we must live by Faith: The Things which God hath prepared for them that love him, are far more excellent, than can be expressed by the Words *Inheritance*, a *Kingdom*, and a *Crown*. But while we remain in this World, they remain under a Veil. Nevertheless

theless they are proposed to us as Objects of our Desire and Hope, and we should be preparing, and praying, and hoping for them.

But although the future Happiness of the Saints does in Part remain a Mystery, yet there is so much of it revealed in the Holy Scriptures, as may well make us astonished at the Riches of the divine Goodness, and as may excite in us earnest Longings to be Partakers of them.

We that believe in Christ, have in Possession, even now while we are passing through the Wilderness of this World, much to rejoice in, and comfort our Souls. For we have an Almighty and a most loving Saviour, a faithful Redeemer, who will keep what we have committed to him. — We have an Interest in all the Promises of the Gospel: Many and precious Promises, which are yea, and amen, sure and certain in Christ Jesus. We have God for our Father, and are made his Children and Heirs.

The Lord is my Portion saith my Soul, therefore will I hope in him. Lament. iii. 24.

O how many joyous Predictions concerning the Saints, do we find in the Word of God? They shall have Treasures in Heaven, as we may conclude from Christ's saying to the Multitude, who heard his Sermon on the Mount, Mat. vi. 19, 20. *Lay not up for yourselves Treasures upon Earth, where Moth, and Rust doth corrupt, and where Thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves Treasures in Heaven, where neither Moth, nor Rust doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through, nor steal.*

The Instruction of our Saviour in these Words, import, that there are Treasures in Heaven, and a Prediction, that they who diligently use the Means shall obtain them.

It is also predicted, that the Saints shall judge the World, and judge Angels: In 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3. Where the Apostle says to the Church of God at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, (chap. 1. ver. 2.) *Do ye not know, that the Saints shall judge the World? — Know ye not that we shall judge Angels?*

These Interrogations imply, that there was a Prediction, that the Saints shall judge the World, and judge Angels: And that the Truth predicted, was well known to the Christians at Corinth.

I do not pretend to explain the Things predicted, but observe, that they imply great Honour and Glory, intended for the Saints.



LETTER VIII.

Of Predictions of Events, subsequent to the Day of Judgment, which will be astonishingly terrible to the Wicked, and inexpressibly happy and glorious to the Saints.

IMAY now observe, that there are Predictions of Events, subsequent to the Day of Judgment: Events, that will be brought to pass at the End of the World, astonishingly terrible to the Wicked, and inexpressibly happy and glorious to the Saints.

As to the Wicked it is foretold, *That the Heavens and the Earth which now are, by the same Word (of God) are kept in Store, reserved unto Fire against the Day of Judgment, and Perdition of ungodly Men. 2 Pet. iii. 7.* Who at the Day of Judgment will be condemned to that dreadful Fire.

In ver. 10. It is said, *But the Day of the Lord, will come as a Thief in the Night, in which the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt away with fervent Heat, the*

Earth also and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up.

And in this burning World it plainly seems, that the Damned are to have their Habitation: Here seems to be the Lake, that burneth with Fire and Brimstone.

In Rev. xxi. 8. It is said, *But the Fearful and Unbelieving, and the Abominable, and Murderers, and Whoremongers, and Sorcerers, and Idolaters, and all Liars, shall have their Part in the Lake, which burneth with Fire and Brimstone; which is the second Death.*

The Predictions relative to the Saints, subsequent to the Day of Judgment, may well excite Joy.

For behold, (says God,) I create new Heavens, and a new Earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into Mind.—But be you glad, and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold I create Jerusalem a Rejoycing, and her People a Joy. Isa. lxxv. 17, 18.

And the Apostle Peter says, *Nevertheless, we according to his Promise (in the last cited Text,) look for new Heavens, and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness.* 2 Pet. iii. 13.

In Rev. xxi. 1. &c. The Predictions are thus expressed, viz. *And I saw a new Heaven, and a new Earth: for the first Heaven and the first Earth were passed away; and there was no more Sea. (No Water to quench, or abate the Fire of the burning Earth.) And I John saw the holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of Heaven, prepared as a Bride adorned for her Husband: And I heard a great Voice out of Heaven, saying, beho'd, the Tabernacle of God is with Men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his People, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: And God shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes;*
and

and there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain, for the former Things are passed away. And he that sat upon the Throne, said, behold I make all Things new: And he said unto me, Write; for these Words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, it is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End: I will give unto him that is athirst, of the Fountain of the Water of Life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all Things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my Son.

The great, the marvellously great, the inexpressibly great Events, which will follow the Day of Judgment, although they are now many Thousands of Years distant, yet will surely be brought to pass. Nevertheless, they should have the same Influence on us, as if they were to happen at the End of our Lives: Because we have only the short and uncertain Time of our Continuance in this World, for seeking an Interest in Christ, and the Pardon of our Sins, and Peace with God, and the Sanctification of our Natures, and the Salvation of our Souls.

We have only the very little Time of our sojourning on Earth, for securing a Deliverance from all the Curses, the Miseries, the Punishments, and Torments predicted against the Unbelieving, the Impenitent, and Disobedient in this Life, and against them after Death, and after the Resurrection, and after the Day of Judgment, and the End of the World.

We have only a short Space of Time for laying up for ourselves Treasures in Heaven, and obtaining a Share in all the Blessings, the Felicities, the Joys, and Glories predicted for sincere Christians in this Life, and after Death, and after the Resurrection, and after the Day of Judgment, and the End of the World: But short as it is, it
is

is long enough to escape Misery, and obtain all Happiness; if Sinners immediately repent of their Sins, and believe in Christ, and in an humble Dependance on his Spirit, and Grace, do henceforth live according to the Rules of the Gospel.

And therefore the present, I say the present Time, should be improved for this most important Work. It is very uncertain to every one, whether there is any future Time, or how little of future Time is allotted to them in this World, by the sovereign Lord of Life?

O how should the Thoughts hereof, quicken every one to give all Diligence to make their Calling and Election sure!

I may observe, that the End of the World, and the general Conflagration of it, was above seventeen hundred Years more future than it is now, when the Apostle Peter wrote his second Epistle; yet he used the Consideration of it, as a Motive to an holy Life.

In 2 Pet. iii. 11. He says, *Seeing then that all these Things will be dissolved, what manner of Persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness?* And in ver. 14. He says, *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such Things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in Peace, without Spot and blameless.*

It is predicted, that *eternal Life* shall be given to all true Believers.

In John vi. 40. The holy Jesus says, *This is the Will of him that sent me, that every one, which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting Life: And I will raise him up at the last Day.* And in ver. 47 He expresseth himself thus, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting Life.* That is, he hath a Title, or a Right to it, and it is begun in him.

St.

St. John says, *This is the Promise that He, (viz. God,) hath promised us, even eternal Life.* 1 John ii. 25. and in chap. v. 11. He adds. *And this is the Record, that God hath given to us (by Promise) eternal Life; and this Life is in his Son.*

In Rom. v. 22. St. Paul says to the Saints at Rome. *But being made free from (that is, from the Dominion of) Sin, and become Servants to God, you have your Fruit unto Holiness, and the End everlasting Life: For the Wages of Sin is Death; but the Gift of God is eternal Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

It must here be observed, that the Expression, *eternal Life*, signifies more than an endless Existence, more than that the Saints shall live for ever after the Resurrection; and implies, that the everlasting Life which God infinitely good and gracious, gives unto them is a spiritual Life, a Life of Holiness and Happiness: I apprehend that it begins in Conversion, with the first Act of true Faith, by which Sinners (before guilty, wretched, and miserable,) become united to Christ, and living Branches of this blessed Vine; and thus shew when they are in the Character of the *Just, whose Path is as the shining Light, that shineth more and more unto a perfect Day.* Prov. iv. 18.

Their Sanctification through the Working of the Holy Spirit is carried on, divine Blessings are multiplied to them, and at Death the Holiness of the Saints is made perfect, and their Happiness with Christ in Heaven is inconceivably increased; and then after the Resurrection of their Bodies, and their Appearance at the Judgment Seat before their Saviour and their Judge; the Fulness of the Rewards purchased by Christ, and promised in the Gospel, will be bestowed on them: And then the Saints with their Souls and Bodies reunited, will be with God, and Christ, with the holy Angels,

gels, with the Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Apostles, and all their fellow Saints, in Mansions of Glory for ever and ever : And there will never, never, never be a Period to their Happiness, and Glory, in the Enjoyment of God : All this I take to be included in these Expressions, *eternal Life*, and *Life everlasting*.

But the Apostle lets us know, that *eternal Life* is not given to the Saints as *Wage* for any Work, or Service they did on Earth ; for the best Services of the best Christians, are not only worthless Performances, and void of Merit, but polluted by Mixture of Sin : And therefore though he calls, and justly calls Death the Wages of Sin, he changes his Phrase, and calls eternal Life the *Gift of God*, and most fitly he does so ; because it is undeserved by us, and most freely bestowed us. (Rom. v 22.)

I may likewise remark, that the Wicked will have an eternal Existence ; but not worthy of the Name of Life, and is properly denoted by the Word, *Death*.

The Death of a Man in this World, is the Separation of his Soul from his Body, which soon after putrefies, turns into Corruption and Earth, as it was.

But the Death of the Wicked, is the Separation of their Persons, both of their Souls and Bodies from God and Christ ; from Peace and Happiness, to endless Punishments, Miseries and Torments. This is the Death of Deaths, the most dreadful of all Deaths ; and it is the Wages of Sin.

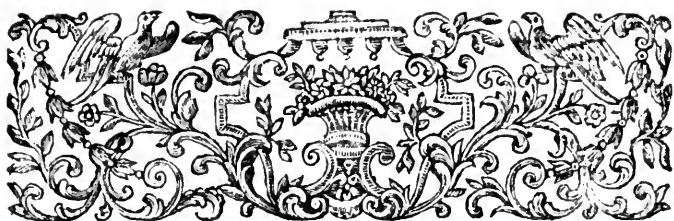
O that careless Sinners would think on this Death in Time !

O merciful God ! open the Eyes of their Minds, awaken their Consciences to consider whom they

are

are serving, and what they are doing, and what *Wages* they must receive for the evil Works they do! O turn them from Darkness to Light; and from the Power of Satan unto thyself, that they may receive Forgiveness of Sins, and Inheritance among them that are sanctified by Faith, that is in Christ Jesus. Amen, for the Sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.





LETTER IX.

Of Predictions, relative to sincere Christians in Time of publick Calamities; some of which are general, and others particular. In Regard,

1. *To their Safety in Times of War.*
2. *To their being provided for in Famines.*
3. *To their Preservation in Seasons of the Pestilence.*
4. *To their being kept from distressing Fears, when desolating Judgments are on the Wicked.*

I SHALL now take Notice of some of the Predictions, relative to God's faithful People, in Times of publick Calamities; of Calamities brought on Cities and Countries, by the righteous Providence of God, as Punishments for Sin.

There are Times when the all-wise God calls his People, his beloved People to Sufferings; and such are the Times when the Wicked are persecuting the Saints of the most high God.

Our blessed Redeemer who went about from City to City, and from Town to Town; teaching the People the Doctrines they were to believe, and the Way for their Salvation foretold them;

not

not of worldly Prosperity, not that they should gain Honours or Riches, if they would become his Disciples: No; but he plainly forewarned them of Troubles, and of great Troubles, if they would be his Disciples.

In Mat. xvi. 24, 25. *Then Jesus said unto his Disciples, if any Man will come after me, (and be my Disciple indeed,) let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me: (in the Way of Sufferings.) For whosoever will save his Life, (by forsaking me,) shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his Life (and suffer Death) for my Sake, shall find it, happily and joyfully in the next World.)*

In Mat. x. 38. Jesus says, *He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* And in Luke xiv. 27. He says, *Whosoever doth not bear his Cross, (when called to it by divine Providence,) and come after me, cannot be my Disciple.* In Mark xiii. 9. *But take Heed to yourselves, for they shall deliver you up to Councils; and in the Synagogues ye shall be beaten, and ye shall be brought before Rulers, and Kings for my Sake.* In John xvi. 2. He says, *They shall put you out of the Synagogues, yea the Time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God Service.*

Most frequently did our blessed Saviour, inculcate the Expectation of Sufferings, and Troubles on those that would be his Disciples. *In this World, ye shall have Tribulation.* He said in John xvi. 33.

The Apostle likewise testified the same: For they went about *confirming the Souls of the Disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the Faith; and that we must through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.* Acts xiv. 22.

And this Conduct is an evident Proof, that Christ was a Teacher come from God; and that the Gospel is no Imposture, but most certainly

truce. Would any Impostor ever teach a System of Notions, and expect to make Profelytes by telling his Hearers, that if they will believe and profess his Doctrines, they will be exposed to manifold Troubles, that it would bring on them the Hatred of Magistrates, and occasion to them the Loss of their Houses, their Lands, their Liberty and Lives.

No Impostor ever talked in such a Strain: The Devil, the subtle Devil, that he may keep Men in Bondage to himself, and prevail with them to go on in Unbelief and Disobedience to God, excites in them the Desire and Hope of sensual Pleasures, or of Riches and Honours. When he tempted our Master and Lord, it was with the Things of this World: *For when he had taken him up into an exceeding high Mountain, and shewed him (a Representation of) all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them.* This lying Spirit said unto him, *All these Things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.* Mat. iv. 8, 9.

But our great Redeemer and his Apostles, in preaching the everlasting Gospel, proposed no worldly Advantages to induce their Hearers to believe and obey it, but gave undeniable Proofs of the Truth of it, and proposed spiritual Blessings in this World, and a Happiness in the Enjoyment of God for ever. They proposed to their Hopes those great Mercies which guilty miserable Sinners stand in need of; they proposed Forgiveness of their Sins, Peace, and Reconciliation with God, and eternal Life: Blessings suitable to the wretched Case of Men, under the Guilt of Sin, under the Condemnation of the Divine Law, obnoxious to the Wrath of God, and the Pains of Hell for ever. And I may add, that the Preaching of the Gospel, was accompanied with the mighty Working of the
Holy

Holy Ghost; the Lord himself bearing Testimony to the Truth of the Word of his Grace; for every Convert was a Seal and Evidence of the Verity of the Gospel.

But a Time of Persecution of the Saints is not a Day of God's Visitation for Sin: There is no Divine Wrath in the bitter Cup of their Sufferings: *No*; but there is wonderful Love in it.

In such Times, God gives his faithful Servants extraordinary Communications of Grace and Strength, and often fills them with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory: He enables them to take joyfully the spoiling of their Goods, and to rejoice in Tribulation, and to count it an Honour to suffer Shame and Death for the Name of Christ, whom their Souls admire and adore, as the Author of Salvation, and everlasting Happiness to them.

And it is predicted, that they who have testified the Sincerity of their Faith in Christ, and Love to him, by laying down their Lives for his Sake, shall live, shall live again before the general Resurrection; for it is said, in Rev. xx. 4. *I saw the Souls of them that were beheaded for the Witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshiped the Beast, neither his Image, neither had received his Mark upon their Foreheads, or in their Hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand Years. And in the next Verse it is added; But the rest of the Dead lived not again, till the thousand Years were finished.*

They that suffer Death in the Cause, and for the Sake of Christ, will have peculiar Rewards, and a more exceeding Weight of Glory.

St. Paul says, *If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together; for I reckon that the Sufferings of the present Time, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed*

revealed in us. Rom. viii. 17, 18. (It will be so exceeding great.)

The Saints are always the Objects of the Love and special Care and Goodness of God. And in the Times of publick Calamities, various Predictions relative to them, do shew the compassionate and faithful Regards which our Father in Heaven, has for them while they remain in this World, even when he is executing his Judgments on wicked Cities and Countries.

Manifold are the Judgments of God for Sin: The most frequent are the SWORD of War, the *Pestilence*, the *Famine* and *Fire*.

But the mighty God takes Care of his People in such dreadful, such desolating Seasons.

There are in every Country, and in every City, a great Variety of Sorts of People, both among the High and the Low: But in God's Account, they are distinguished only into two Sorts, *viz.* his faithful People, who know, and love, and serve him; who keep his Covenant and his Testimonies; and those who live in a Course of wilful Disobedience to his holy Commandments.

And when the Providence of God brings his destroying Judgments into any Nation or Town, it is to punish and destroy the Wicked; and it is a Day of the Lord's Visitation for Sin.

We may be sure that the Lord has a Controversy with every Place into which he brings the Sword, the Miseries of War, or of the Pestilence, or of Famine, or of any other destructive Calamity.

And we know that in such dreadful Times, the Lord's Controversy is not with the Righteous: The Vials of his Wrath are not intended to be poured out on them: No; God will take a special Care of them.

The *Predictions* which have been taken Notice of in the foregoing Papers, may be as so many Cordials to console their Minds, in Days of the most terrible Calamities.

God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in Trouble. Psa. xlvi. 1.

And there are Predictions on Record in the Holy Scriptures, which shew the Regard which the Almighty and all-gracious God has for his faithful Servants.

God, before he inflicts Punishments on any sinful People, gives them Warning by his Servants the Prophets: So he did in the Times of the Old Testament.

But the divine Threatnings, I think, are not to be interpreted, as if it was intended that every individual wicked Person should be destroyed.

Sometimes God has threatned Judgments to take away the *fourth* Part of Men. Rev. vi. 8. Sometimes a *third* Part of the People. Rev. ix. 5. Which implies, that the merciful God would suffer very many individual Persons to escape.

And it is foretold of those that should escape, that they would remain impenitent and unreformed. Rev. ix. 19, 20. It is said, *And the rest of Men which were not killed by these Plagues, yet repented not of the Works of their Hands, that they should not worship Devils, and Idols of Gold, and Silver, and Brass, and Stone and Wood; which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their Murders, nor of their Sorceries, nor of their Fornications, nor of their Thefts.*

And as to the Promises made to the Righteous, it does not appear to me, that they are to be interpreted as if no sincere Christians will suffer by Means of the Calamities, which will be inflicted on the Wicked in the Day of their Visitation: For many are the Afflictions of the Righteous,

even in Times of publick Tranquility, and of publick Prosperity; and they are at all Times liable to Losses, Disappointments, a Variety of Troubles, Diseases, and Death.

But this I may say, that they are not the Objects of the divine Wrath; they are not that Part of the People God is contending with, when he is pouring out the Vials of his Indignation on incorrigible Sinners.

But they are that Sort of People, which God will take a special Care of in Times of publick Calamities, and of Distress in Nations and Cities: God would not destroy Sodom, till he had removed Lot out of it.

And there are many Predictions of our Father which is in Heaven, which shews his Regard to his beloved Children, and what they may hope for and expect in those melancholy Days, when they shall be surrounded with Multitudes of Examples of divine Vengeance, ruining particular Persons, Families and Towns.

As to the Righteous it is predicted, that when God's Judgments shall be executed, it shall be *well with them*.

In Isa. iii. 10, 11. God gives these Predictions to his Prophets, in respect to the Time of his Judgments on Judah and Jerusalem: *Say ye to the Righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the Fruit of their Doings: Wo unto the Wicked it shall be ill with him; for the Reward of his Hands shall be given him.*

The Words shew that God, most Merciful, will have his People comforted with the Assurance from him, that when it goes ill with the Wicked, suffering under destroying Judgments, it shall at the same Time go well with the Righteous: And that Expression, *Say ye*, shews that it was the Duty not only of Isaiah, but of all other Prophets and Ministers

Ministers of God, to declare to the People the same Assurance.

And the Words do likewise shew, that it is the Duty of the Ministers of Christ in all Ages, and in all Countries, when they learn from the Threatnings of God's Word, and from the Wickedness of the Generality of People among whom they dwell, and from the Operations of the divine Providence, that destroying Judgments are approaching; it is their Duty then to speak comfortably to the Godly, and declare to them, that whatever Calamities shall come, it will go well with them; though it will go ill with the Wicked.

I shall now collect the Predictions about the Righteous in Times of publick Calamities, under the following Heads, *viz.*

1. It is predicted, that they shall be preserved in *Safety* in Times of WAR; they shall be safe, though surrounded with Dangers.

In Prov. xviii. 10. It is said, *The Name of the Lord is a strong Tower; the Righteous runneth into it, and is safe.* The Words signify a Prediction to the Righteous, that if they by Prayer, and Faith seek to God for his Protection, they shall find Safety.

In Prov. xxix. 25. It is said, *Who so putteth his Trust in the Lord, shall be safe.* All the Righteous do put their Trust in him; therefore the Promise is a Prediction of Safety to them.

In 2 Chron. xvi. 9. It is said, *The Eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole Earth to shew himself strong in the Behalf of them, whose Heart is perfect towards him.* Which Words imply God's watchful Providence over the Righteous, and that he will manifest the Greatness of his

Power in protecting them from the Dangers they may meet with.

In 1 Sam. ii. 9. It is said, *He will keep the Feet of his Saints, and the Wicked shall be silent in Darknefs.*

In Pſal. xci. 1. It is ſaid, *He that dwelleth in the ſecret Place of the moſt High, ſhall abide (in ſafety) under the Shadow of the Almighty.*

Verſe 2. *I will ſay of the LORD, he is my Refuge, and my Fortreſs, my GOD, in him will I truſt.* Verſe 4. *He ſhall cover thee with his Feathers, and under his Wings ſhall thou truſt: His Truth ſhall be thy Shield and Buckler.* Verſe 10. *There ſhall no Evil befall thee.* Theſe Words teach us our Duty of truſting in God, and imply a Prediction of Safety to righteous Perſons, who do ſo. Pſa. cxxi. Is full of Predictions of the like Import.

God's faithful Care of his Church and People, is likewise predicted, in Iſa. xxvii. 3. *I the LORD do keep it, I will water it every Moment, leſt any hurt it, I will keep it Night and Day.*

In Zech. ii. 5. The Almighty ſpeaketh thus, *For I ſaith the Lord, will be unto her (i. e. his Church,) a Wall of Fire round about, and will be the Glory in the Miſt of her.*

In Job v. 20. It is ſaid, *In WAR he ſhall redeem thee from the Power of the Sword.*

In Prov. iii. 25, 26. It is ſaid, *Be not afraid of ſudden Fear, nor of the Deſolation of the Wicked, when it cometh: For the LORD ſhall be thy Confidence, and ſhall keep thy Foot from being taken.*

The Righteous in Countries that are the Seat of War, when oppoſite Armies are Marching and Counter-marching, and are frequently Fighting with each other, the Righteous are in the Miſt of Perils and Dangers; but in the Miſt of all theſe Perils and Dangers, and even in Battle, if
God

God will preserve them, they are as safe, as if there were none.

Every Bullet that is shot, and every Stroke of the Sword had it's Direction from the Providence of God: Since one Sparrow shall not fall on the Ground, without our Father which is in Heaven; (Mat. x. 29.) since not one of them is forgotten before God; (Luke xii. 6.) since no Evil happens to those little Birds, without his Providence; we may be sure, that no Wound, no Hurt, happens to any Person in a Battle without it.

It is the Providence of God which takes away those, who are slain in War, and which preserves those, who escape unhurt.

In Mat. xxiv. 40, 41. It is said, *Then two shall be in the Field, the one shall be taken, and the other left; two Women shall be grinding at the Mill, the one shall be taken, and the other left.* And it is God who determines which of them shall be taken, and which of them shall be left.

In perilous Times, the Righteous may use the Words of David, and say, *The LORD is my Light, and my Salvation, whom shall I fear? The LORD is the Strength of my Life, of whom shall I be afraid?* Psa. xxvii. 1. And they may be confident, that the LORD will fulfil all his Predictions.

2. It is predicted, that the Righteous shall be provided for in Times of Calamities by FAMINE. Famine, is a Judgment very terrible; but blessed be the Name of our bountiful God, we of this Generation have never seen the most deplorable Effects of it.

It may help us to some right Apprehensions and Sense of it, if we read what is said of it by the Prophet.

The Prophet Jeremiah describes the Miseries of a Famine in Lament. iv. Where he says, *The*

Tongue of the suckling Child, cleaveth to the Roof of his Mouth for Thirst; the young Children ask Bread, and no Man breaketh it unto them. ver. 4.

They that did feed delicately, are desolate in the Streets; they that were brought up in Scarlet, embrace Dungbills. ver. 5.

For the Punishment of the Iniquity of the Daughter of my People, is greater than the Punishment of the Sin of Sodom, that was overthrown in a Moment. ver. 6.

Their Visage is blacker than a Coal; they are not known in the Streets, their Skin cleaveth to their Bones; (their Flesh being wasted for want of Food,) it is withered, it is become like a Stick. ver. 8.

They that be slain with the Sword, are better than they that be slain with Hunger. For these pine away, stricken through, for Want of the Fruits of the Field. ver. 9.

The Hands of the pitiful Women have sodden their own Children; they were their Meat, in the Destruction of the Daughter of my People. ver. 10.

O how tremendous are the Miseries of a great Famine! And War often brings on a Famine, even in the most fruitful Countries.

But it is predicted, that God will provide for his own People in such desolating and dreadful Times.

In Psa. xxxiii. 18, 19. It is said, *Behold the Eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him: Upon them that hope in his Mercy; to deliver their Souls from Death, and to keep them alive in Famine.*

In Psa. xxxvii. 19. It is said of them, *They shall not be ashamed in the evil Time: And in the Days of Famine they shall be satisfied.*

In Isa. xli. 17. *When the Poor and Ncedy seek Water, and there is none, and their Tongues faileth*

for Thirst, I the Lord will bear them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

These Predictions imply, that God will preserve the Righteous, and provide necessary Food for them, even when there shall be the greatest Scarcity.

And our gracious God has recorded them in his Word, for the Comfort of his People against the Terrors of such a Judgment: They may be sure that God is faithful to his promise, and will fulfil all his Predictions: His Wisdom knows how to contrive Ways and Means for their Supply; and his Power is able to procure all that shall be needful for them.

3. It is predicted, that the Righteous shall be preserved in Times of the PESTILENCE.

In Psalm xci. 2. The Sentiments, and pious Resolution of the Righteous are thus expressed. ver. 2. *I will say of the LORD, he is my Refuge, and my Fortrefs, my God, in him wil I trust.* And this is the Language of every one of God's faithful People.

In this Psalm are many comfortable Predictions relative to them. In ver. 3, &c. it is said, *Surely he shall deliver thee from the Snare of the Fowler; and from the noisome Pestilence. He shall cover thee with his Feathers, and under his Wings shalt thou trust: His Truth shall be thy Shield and Buckler: Thou shalt not be afraid for the Terror by Night; nor for the Arrow that flyeth by Day: Nor for the Pestilence that walketh in Darkness; nor for the Destruction, that wasteth at noon Day. A Thousand shall fall by thy Side, and ten Thousand at thy right Hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine Eyes shalt thou behold and see the Reward of the Wicked. (ver. 8.) Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my Refuge, even the most High, thy Habitation: (by Faith and*

and Prayer, trusting in him, and praying to him in the Way of Holiness.) *There shall no Evil befall thee, neither shall any Plague come nigh thy Dwelling. For he, (God) shall give his Angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy Ways.*

If some particular Persons should die by a pestilential Fever, they will be immediately happy in a better World.

But it is evident from ver. 8. 1st. That when God sends the Pestilence into any City, or Country, it is not against the Righteous: No; they are the Sort of People, God has appointed for his Protection. And 2dly. It is manifest that the Wicked are the Sort who are appointed to die by the Pestilence.

It appears from ver. 5. That God would not have the Righteous to be afraid, when the Pestilence comes into the Town, and Country where they dwell: And he assures them of Safety; that he will surely deliver them: (ver. 3.) That though Multitudes may die round about them, yet the Arrows of Destruction shall not come nigh them: Only with their Eyes shall they see Examples of God's Vengeance among the Wicked, and that no Evil shall befall them, or come nigh their Dwelling. God will give his Angels charge over them; this will be their security.

Comfortable Promises these are! Blessed be our good God for them! And they will most faithfully be performed: And therefore I need only to observe, that it is our Interest and Duty to make it sure, that we are of that Number to which they belong.

4. It is Predicted, that the Righteous shall be preserved from *distressing Fears* in Times of publick Calamities.

FEAR *hath* Torment. 1 John iv. 18. Perils and Dangers naturally excite Fear.

And the greater, and more terrible the Evils are, the greater is the Pain and Anguish of the Mind at their Approach.

The Time of publick Judgments, is a Time of dismal Fears to the Wicked: When the Almighty cometh forth to take Vengeance on them; when the Vials of his Wrath are pouring forth among them, they will fear; *Fearfulness will surprize the Hypocrites.* Isa. xxxiii. 14.

In some Circumstances of Affliction, a good Man may be greatly distressed with Fears: And this seems to have been the Case with David. Psa. lv. 5. When he said, *Fearfulness and Trembling are upon me, and Horror hath overwhelmed me.* But every sincere Christian may pray, and obtain freedom from his Fears.

Fears also may arise in the Minds of pious Persons, under the Apprehension of Miseries like to befall the People of the Land in which they dwell; which seems to be the Case of the Prophet. Isa. xxi. 4. Where he says, *My Heart panteth; Fearfulness affrighted me; the Night of my Pleasure hath be turned into Fear unto me.* That is, by his being informed of the Judgments God was then about to bring on his People.

But such Fears, are not the Fears of guilty Sinners going on in their Trespases, which they feel, when their Consciences are made sensible of their Guilt.

God has promised Peace and Comfort to his own Children and Servants, even when he is punishing his, and their Enemies.

It is a comfortable Prediction relative to a righteous Man, in Psa. cxii. 7. Where it is said, *He shall not be afraid of evil Tidings; his Heart is fixed trusting in the LORD.*

There

There is a Fear consistent with inward Tranquility and Comfort of Soul; there is a Fear which is our Duty.

It is said, *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him.* (Deut. vi. 13.) Our good God is the supreme Object of our Fear: And the Duty of fearing him is most frequently inculcated in the Holy Scriptures.

And the Beginning the Practice of this Duty, is the Beginning of Wisdom. The Whole of serious practical Piety, is often denoted by the Expression the *Fear of God.*

And many Things are predicted, for the engaging People to this Duty, Solomon says, *Yet surely I know it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him.* Eccle. viii. 13. *Surely his Salvation is nigh them that fear him.* It is said, Psa. lxxxv. 8.

There is also a Fear due to Magistrates; a great Respect to their Authority; *For Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the Evil: Will thou then not be afraid of the Power?* Says the Apostle Paul, Rom. xiii. 3. Thereby teaching Christians that they ought to have a Fear of their Power, and not incur their Displeasure by any evil Doings.

A Fear is likewise due to Parents. In Levit. xix. 1, 2, 3. *The LORD spake unto Moses saying, speak unto all the Congregation of the Children of Israel, and say unto them, ye shall be holy; for I the LORD your God am holy. Ye shall fear every Man his Mother, and his Father, and keep my Sabbaths: I am the LORD thy God. Ye shall fear every Man his Mother, and his Father.*

These Words are one of the Commandments and Laws of God, and he has never repealed it: The Reasons for it are always the same, and so is the Obligation to obey it: It implies that Respect, that

that Awe, and Regard to Parents, which shall restrain us from giving them any just Occasion of Offence, and Grief, and shall constrain us to contribute to their Support and Comfort, as much as they shall want, and we shall be able to contribute.

There is another LAW in this Book of *Leviticus*, and it may not generally be known; because all the holy Laws of God are not generally read in the worshiping Assemblies of Christians; and yet this is an important One, and the Reasons of it have always the same Weight.

In Levit. x. 8, 9, 10, 11. *The LORD spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink Wine, nor strong Drink, thou, nor thy Sons with thee, when ye go into the Tabernacle of the Congregation, lest ye die: It shall be a Statute for ever throughout your Generations: And that ye may put Difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean. And that ye may teach the Children of Israel all the Statutes, which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the Hand of Moses.*

If the Priests of God, under the Old Testament, and the Ministers of Christ under the New, had the Liberty of drinking strong Liquors before they went into the Congregation to administer the Ordinances of divine Worship, and to teach the People the revealed Will of God, they might be tempted to drink too much, and become incapable of a due Performance of their Office; and if they were earnest in their Exhortations, the People might be tempted to think their Zeal and Fervour did not proceed from the Assistance of the Holy Spirit of God, but from the Spirits of the strong Liquors they drank.

But God by his Law absolutely forbidding them to drink Wine, or strong Drink, effectually prevents these ill Consequences, if they

who officiate publickly in the divine Worship, do observe this Law.

I have mentioned the proper Objects of Fear, I shall now shew whom we ought not to fear: And we ought not to fear either wicked Men, or wicked Devils.

We ought not to fear *wicked Men*. *Fear not them which kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul: But rather fear him which is able to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell*; says our blessed Saviour. Mat. x. 28.

Our good God says to his People, (in Isa. li. 12.) *I even I am he that comforteth you; who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of Man, that shall die, and of the Son of Man, which shall be made as Grass?*

In Isa. xli. 10. God says to his People, *Fear thou not (thine Enemies,) for I am with thee, be not dismayed for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right Hand of my Righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee, shall be ashamed and confounded, they shall be as nothing, and they that strive with thee, shall perish.*

O what a Cluster of comfortable Predictions are these! and they have been, they are, and they will be fulfilled to the Saints in all Ages; and the Saints in all Ages have found much Consolation in musing upon them.

But as we should not be afraid of wicked Men, so neither should we fear the *wicked Devils*, those unholy Angels: There are Multitudes of them in all Places, though they are spoken of in the singular Number, as if there was but one, because one among them is their Chief, the Prince of Devils; and because they are all one in Design; but as numerous as they are, we have no Reason to fear them.

In James iv. 7. It is said, *Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.* Which Words contain a Prediction, that the Devil will flee from those serious Christians who resist him: Christ the Captain of our Salvation (who himself suffered, being tempted) knows how, and is able to succour and deliver his Disciples when they are tempted, and will make the Devil to cease his Temptations and to depart from them.

The Apostle Peter (in 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.) says to the Saints, *Be sober, be vigilant, because your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lyon, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the Faith, knowing that the same Afflictions are accomplished in your Brethren, that are in the World.*

Our mighty Saviour would have us, with firmness of Mind, to continue our Resistance to the Devil, and without fear of being overcome by him.

O how often does our good God speak comfortably to his People, and say unto them, *Fear not!*

In Isa. xxvi. 3. the Prophet by the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says to God, *Thou wilt keep him in perfect Peace whose Mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.* A Prediction this, which hath been the Means of much Comfort to many a Christian in Times of Trouble.

But where is the Christian that hath perfect Peace? The Words of the Prophet imply, that a trusting in God, or Faith in Exercise, is the Means of enjoying the sweet Blessing of Peace, and of freedom from distressing Fears: And where is the Christian that has his Faith and Trust in God, always in due Exercise?

There is a Remainder of sinful Corruption in the Souls of the best Christians, so that the Good they would do, they sometimes do not.

Abraham, the Father of Believers, and the glorious Example of a strong Faith, had special and immediate Assurances of God's Favour and Protection.

The Lord said unto Abram, I will make of thee a great Nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy Name great, and thou shalt be a Blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all Families of the Earth be blessed. Gen. xii. 1, 2, 3.

And in about a Year after these gracious Assurances, given him immediately from the Lord, when he went into Egypt to sojourn there, his Faith was very weak, and unbelieving Fear distressed his Mind, and prevailed with him to deny his Wife, and to engage her to say, she was his Sister. Gen. xii. ver. 10—13.

In Gen. xiii. the sacred History informs us, that when Abram dwelt in the Land of Canaan, *The Lord said unto him,—All the Land which thou seeest, to thee will I give it, and to thy Seed for ever.* (ver. 15.) *And I will make thy Seed as the Dust of the Earth.* (ver. 16.)

In Gen. xvii. 1. *When Abram was ninety Years old and nine, the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said unto him, I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect; and I will make my Covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.* (ver. 2.) And changed his Name to Abraham. (ver. 5.) And said, *I will make Nations of thee, and Kings shall come out of thee.* ver. 6.—*And I will establish my Covenant between me and thee, and thy Seed after thee in their Generations, for an everlasting Covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy Seed after thee.* ver. 7.

As for Sarai thy Wife—I will bless her, and give thee a Son also of her: yea I will bless her, and she shall

shall be a Mother of Nations; Kings of People shall be of her. ver. 15, 16.

And after all these Promises made to Abraham immediately by the almighty and faithful God, did he a second Time deny his Wife: He did so at Gerar to Abimelech the King, who (when Abraham had told him she was his Sister) took her, but the Lord made Abimelech to restore her. (Gen. xx. 1, 2.)

This was about twenty and three Years after the Promises God had made to him, in Gen. xii.

O what are the best of Men, if left to themselves! Lord, increase my Faith, and by thy holy Spirit keep it always in due Exercise!

Another Instance of human Frailty we have in David: The Prophet Samuel, by God's Appointment, anointed David to be king over Israel after the Death of Saul: He was, according to Chronology, anointed in the Year 1063 before Christ.

And yet this good Man in the Year 1058 before Christ, that is, about five Years after Samuel had anointed him to be King, almost despaired of God's performing his Promise. For in 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. we read that David said in his Heart, *I shall now perish one Day by the Hand of Saul.*

No wonder then, considering these Instances of Faith being sometimes very weak, that serious Christians at Times have their Doubts and Fears.

All our past Experiences prove to us, that God is a present Help in Trouble, that he has been so to us in all our past Distresses, he has supported us, and wrought one Deliverance for us after another; yet when we meet with new Afflictions, Disappointments, or Straits, or Dangers, how often do unbelieving Doubts and Fears arise in our Minds; especially if the Devil is suffered, for our Trial, to throw his Suggestions into our Minds.

Nevertheless, God has provided for our Comfort, and Remedies against perplexing Fears in Times of publick Calamities, whether present, or approaching.

Come my People (says our God) *enter thou into thy Chambers, and shut thy Doors about thee, and hide thyself as it were for a little Moment, until the Indignation be overpast: For behold, the Lord cometh out of his Place, to punish the Inhabitants of the Earth for their Iniquities.* Isa. xxvi. 20, 21.

1. These Words shew, that there are Times when God will punish the Inhabitants of the Earth for their Iniquities.

2. That God has a gracious Regard to the Safety and the Comfort of his People, through the Time that his Judgments are destroying stubborn Sinners, even till the Indignation be overpast, till the Effects of his Wrath cease: Therefore did he give Directions to his People, what Course they should take for Safety and Comfort during the Day of his terrible Visitation; *viz.* to enter into their Chambers, and shut the Doors about them, and to hide themselves: This Direction, I apprehend signifies, that the Righteous do daily commit themselves by Faith and Prayer to God's Protection, and walk closely and circumspcctly with him, in the Way of their Duty, and keep themselves from all unnecessary Converse with the open Enemies of God, taking special Care that they be not Partakers of their Sins, lest they also become Partakers of their Plagues.

God's People sometimes grow careless and remiss in their Obedience, and comply with the sinful Customs of the Age in which they live: And to such as these, the Prophet Zephaniah seems to speak, when he said, *Before the Decree bring forth, before the Day pass as the Chaff, before the fierce Anger of*

of the LORD come upon you, before the Day of the LORD's Anger come upon you: Seek ye the Lord, all ye Meek of the Earth, which have wrought his Judgments (in Time past,) seek Righteousness, seek Meekness; it may be, ye shall be hid in the Day of the LORD's Anger. Zeph. ii. 2, 3.

If we walk closely with God, in the Way of Faith and Holiness, we may hope, he will free and preserve us from terrifying Fears, even if we should be surrounded with Danger.

Those are comfortable Words in Prov. iii. 23. to ver. 26. *Then shalt thou walk in thy Way safely, and thy Foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy Sleep shall be sweet.*

Be not afraid of sudden Fear, neither of the Desolation of the Wicked when it cometh; for the LORD shall be thy Confidence, and shall keep thy Foot from being taken.

The Loving-kindness of God, and his compassionate and faithful Care of the Righteous, appear in all his Predictions, which relate to them.

The sacred *Predictions* collected in the foregoing Papers, and the very many which have not been mentioned, do abundantly manifest, that the holy God in the Operations of his Providence, will make a Difference between the Righteous and the Wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.

They reveal the Blessings which all true Believers do enjoy, and may hope for in this Life, and after Death, and at the Resurrection, and at the Day of Judgment, and through a never ending Eternity after it: They also Display and that very awfully, the Curses and Miseries of the Wicked, while they remain on this Earth, and the unutterable Torments they must endure in their
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Souls after Death to the Resurrection, and in their Souls and Bodies then reunited, at the Judgment of the great Day, and after the End of the World, in a Duration, which will never, never have an End.

The righteous and merciful God hath set before the Children of Men in his holy Word, *Life*, and *Good*; and *Death*, and *Evil*, (according to what is said, Deut. xxx. 15.)

O that every one was Wise to make the right Choice, to choose Life and Good, and act accordingly!

I have in these Letters, from an ardent Desire of being, with many others, an happy Instrument of promoting the everlasting Salvation, and Happiness, and present Comfort of Men, set before my Readers those Things which are of the greatest Importance for them to know, and consider.

I have set before them a Summary of the Laws of God, that so by comparing their Lives and Actions, with the holy Commandments, the Guilty may be convinced of their Sins, and of their Want of a Saviour. *Wherefore the Law was our Schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by Faith.* Gal. iii. 24.

I have set before them the Curses, the Punishments, and Miseries predicted to befall them, except they repent of their Sins and believe in the Lord Jesus; that so they may be excited to rejoice in the glad Tidings of our glorious Redeemer, (who is both able and willing to save, even the Chief of Sinners,) and be prevailed with to become his sincere Disciples.

I have likewise, with as much Brevity and Clearness as I could, related the Evidences of Christ's being the promised *Messiah*, for the Conviction of those who have denied or doubted of the

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the Verity of the Christian Religion, and for the Confirmation of the Faith of serious Christians.

I have taken Notice of the Holy Spirit dwelling in true Believers, and of their Justification, their Adoption to be the Children of God, and his Heirs to an Inheritance in Heaven, and of their Sanctification and Perseverance till they receive the End of their Faith, the Salvation of their Souls: These are Blessings predicted for all true Believers, and are necessary to their Salvation; and for these Reasons, the faithful Ministers of Christ do frequently preach on them, and are glad that they themselves are Partakers of such inestimable Benefits; and glad that they have such powerful Motives to make use of, for ingaging Men to repent of their Sins, to believe and obey the Gospel: And serious Christians are glad to hear such Doctrines preached, being sensible that these Blessings are necessary to the Safety, the Comfort, and Happiness of their immortal Souls.

I have taken Notice of the principal Doctrines of the Gospel, for rectifying the Sentiments of those, who have entertained mistaken Notions of them, and for the Establishment of those who believe them.

I have out of the Multitude, collected many Predictions of Blessings to the Righteous, to all who believe in Christ, and live according to the Gospel, for their Consolation at all Times, and under the various Afflictions and Troubles they may meet with in the common Course of Life: And have mentioned several precious Promises recorded in the Holy Scriptures for the Comfort of sincere Christians of every Denomination, when the righteous God shall visit the Cities and Countries wherein they dwell, with his destroying Judgments for the Iniquities of the Inhabitants.

And I have not in this Service, endeavoured to exprefs myself with excellency of Speech, nor in Words which Man's Wisdom teacheth; but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual Things with Spiritual.

The *Word of God*, is the *Sword of the Spirit*. Ephes. vi. 17. *And the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart.* Heb. iv. 12.

It is the *Law of the Lord*, that is perfect, converting the Soul: It is the *Testimony of the Lord* that is sure, making wise the Simple. Psal. xix. 7, 8.

It is by the Word of God, that the Holy Spirit bringeth Sinners to believe in Christ. St. Paul says, *So then Faith cometh by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God*, (read, or preached.) Rom. x. 17.

So it is by the Word of God, that the Saints are sanctified; therefore said the blessed Jesus to his Father, *Sanctify them through thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth.* John xvii. 17.

And his Word of Promise is the Means of their Peace, their Comfort, and their Joy: O how should Christians prize the Holy Scriptures, and improve all Opportunities of reading, and hearing them?

PROPHANE Persons will deride them: It is foretold, that, *There shall come in the last Days, Scoffers walking after their own Lusts: 2 Pet. iii. 3.* But in the Word of Truth, it is said, that, *The Curse of the LORD is in the House of the Wicked; but he blesteth the Habitation of the Just. Surely he scorneth the Scorners: but he giveth Grace unto the Lowly.* Prov. iii. 33, 34.

It is expressly declared, that *Judgments are prepared for Scorners, and Stripes for the Back of Fools.* Prov. xix. 29. and there have been Instances of God's Indignation against such Offenders: For (as it is said, in Isa. xxix 30.) *The terrible One is brought to nought, and the Scornor is consumed, and all that watch for Iniquity are cut off.* God will magnify his Word above all his Name.

If there is any Error or Mistake in these Letters, it is mine; and those Things which are true and useful in them, I collected from the Holy Scriptures: And I earnestly pray that God, the God of all Grace, who delighteth not in the Death of the Wicked, and has demonstrated his Willingness to be reconciled to sinful Men, and displayed his amazing Love, by sending his only begotten and beloved Son into the World, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life: I earnestly pray that he will bless and prosper these Endeavours to the saving Benefit, and great Comfort of those, who shall read them; Amen, for the Sake of Jesus Christ who is worthy, Amen.

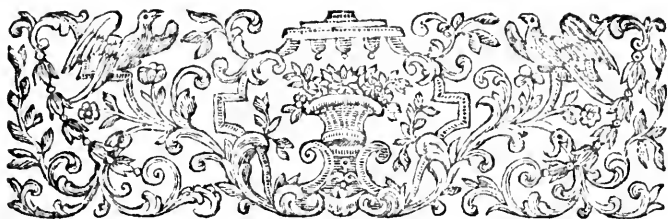
Psal. viii. 1, 2. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy Name in all the Earth! Who hast thy Glory above the Heavens.

Out of the Mouth of Babes, and Sucklings hast thou ordained Strength, because of thine Enemies, that thou mightest still the Enemy, and the Avenger.

Therefore blessed and praised be thy Name, O LORD; because in so doing the more illustrious is thy Power, and the greater is thy Glory.

Luke ii. 14. Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.

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LETTER X.

Containing an Answer to the Question, viz. Whether the publick Reading the Holy Scriptures on the Lord's Days, is an Ordinance of divine Appointment, and a Part of the Worship, which God requires from his People?

THE Question being about a Custom, or Practice used in the publick Worship of God in many Congregations of Christians, and in many others not used; it is of great Moment to enquire what is the Will of God concerning it.

There are two divine Laws, which will lead us to a right Determination, viz.

I. The First is in Deut. iv. 2. where God the supreme Lawgiver, said, YE SHALL NOT ADD TO THE WORD WHICH I COMMAND YOU, NEITHER SHALL YOU DIMINISH OUGHT FROM IT; THAT YE MAY KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD YOUR GOD.

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As if it had been said, that ye may keep them pure, and intire, without any Addition to, or Diminution from them.

II. The other is in Deut. xii. 32. where our holy God said, WHAT THING SOEVER I COMMAND YOU, OBSERVE TO DO IT: THOU SHALT NOT ADD THERETO, NOR DIMINISH FROM IT.

These LAWS have never been repealed: No; but they are obligatory in all Ages, and in all Places: The Reasons of them are always the same; and no Creatures, neither Men, nor Angels, have a Power paramount, or superior to that of the glorious Creator, nor Authority to alter, to add to, or take away any Thing from what the most high God has commanded, who can crush Angels, and Men into nothing, as easily as he made them: And therefore the most wise, the most potent, and the most exalted among Angels or Men, should never dare to change, or presume to mend the Ordinances he has appointed.

O my Soul! Dread the being a Transgressor of the mentioned Laws! If I should make any Addition to the Things which the LORD hath commanded; would it not signify, that I think them defective? And if I lay aside the Use of any one of his Ordinances, does it not denote, that I think it needless; that I think it would have been better if it had not been enjoined? And as to both these Ways of Acting, are they not an Impeachment of the divine Wisdom, and an Usurpation of the divine Authority? Dreadful Imagination! to think of mending any of the Institutions of the infinitely wise, and holy God!

Horrid Thoughts! Horrid Thoughts! LORD evermore preserve me from them, and keep me
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from complying with any Alteration of thine Ordinances! And enable me always to keep them pure, and intire! Amen, for the Sake of Jesus Christ, and for the Sake of thy great Name.

If the publick Reading the Holy Scriptures in the Assemblies of Christians for the Worship of God, be an Addition to the Things, which the Lord hath commanded; if it is a Thing, he would not have to be done, it should be laid aside in every Congregation of his People:

But, if on searching the Holy Scriptures, it shall appear, that the Reading them in the worshiping Assemblies of Christians on the Lord's Days, is an Ordinance which God has appointed, and what he will have to be done, then it ought to be done in every Congregation of Christians on those holy Days; and the Neglect of it, is a manifest Transgression of the Laws mentioned.

I may further observe, that if this Practice of publick Reading the Sacred Scriptures is an Ordinance of God, and Part of the Worship he requires from his People, then Sermons and the other Parts of the holy Service should be so shortened, as to allow Time for a sufficient Use of it.

Now in Answer to the QUESTION, although the publick Worship of God consists of several Parts; it will be sufficient, in regard to our Subject, if I take Notice of the two following, *viz.*

1. That the publick Worship, consists in solemn Addresses to God: When Christians join together in offering up at the Throne of Grace in the Name of Christ, our glorious Mediator, Petitions, and Supplications for Grace, Mercies and Blessings, for themselves and others: These Prayers signify a Sense of God's Knowledge of all the Wants of his People, and of his Power and Goodness to supply them.

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Thus Thanksgivings for Benefits received by us, and by others, are Acts of Worship, as they signify and express to God, grateful Acknowledgments of his Mercy manifested by his bestowing them.

And thus all Expressions to God, which denote a serious Sense of his glorious Attributes, and those which are expressive of a filial Fear of him, and of our Love to him, our Trust and Hope in him, and our Resolution (by the Help of his holy Spirit) to serve and obey him, are Acts of religious Worship: There is no Doubt of all this.

2. The Worship of God consists in a serious Attention and Regard to what *He speaketh* unto us.

The great God speaketh unto Men by the Holy Scriptures, by his Word *read*, and by his Word *preached*.

God gives us leave to speak unto him, as in the fore-mentioned Part of his Worship, and we should rejoice that he condescends to speak unto us; and we should know, that he commands us to hear him.

A serious attentive *Hearing* his Word, that is, his Holy Scriptures, is expressive of Reverence to him, and of our Regard to his Authority, and to the Doctrines, the Precepts, the Promises and Threatnings of his Word, and to the Records of his Providence, contained in the historical Parts of it.

This is a very important Part of the Worship we owe to God, the Good of our Salvation, as will appear from the Revelation he has made of his Will.

In Exod. xxxiv. 7. We are informed that, *Moses took the Book of the Covenant, and read it*

(and all the Commandments of the Lord) *in the Audience of all the People.*

I may here observe, that in every Age, and in every Congregation of God's People, there are always the same Reasons for the publick Reading of the Holy Scriptures, *viz.* to instruct the Ignorant, and to stir up the pure Minds of the Godly by way of Remembrance.

In Joshua viii. 34, 35. It is said, *Joshua read all the Words of the Law, the Blessings and Cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was NOT A WORD OF ALL THAT MOSES commanded, which Joshua read not before all the Congregation of Israel, with the Women, and the little Ones, and the Strangers that were conversant among them.*

The important End for which Joshua performed this Service, was that the People, old and young, might know the Commandments, and all the revealed Will of God: He did it as a Means of communicating to them that Knowledge, which was necessary for them to obtain.

I think it may be said, that People in every Age, and every Congregation do very much want the same Means of Knowledge. And that the publick Reading the divine Laws, and the Writings of the Prophets and Apostles, may with the divine Blessing contribute as much to the same holy Purposes as in the Days of Joshua.

In Nehemiah viii. 1. We are told, *That all the People gathered themselves together as one Man. And they spake unto Ezra the Scribe, to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.*

In Verses 2, 3. We are informed that, *Ezra the Priest brought the Law before the Congregation both of Men and Women, and all that could hear with Understanding, and that he read therein from*
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the Morning until Midday before the Men, and the Women, and those that could understand; and the Ears of all the People were attentive to the Book of the Law.

In this Account it is observable,

1. That the Reading of the Laws of God, or the Holy Scriptures, which were then extant, was at the Request of the People. A good Example for those People to imitate, who have not had the Opportunity of hearing the Holy Scriptures publickly read.

2. That in this Assembly, much of the Law of the Lord was read, as appears from the Reading of it, from Morning to the Midday.

3. That all the People were attentive to the Reading: The holy God by his Word read, did speak unto all his People there assembled; and and their serious Attention to it, was a *Service of Worship* to him, expressive of their Reverence of him, and of their Regard to his Authority, and to his holy Commandments: And this is an Example, which ought to be imitated by all People when the Laws of the LORD are publickly read, and they have Opportunity of hearing them.

In Deut. iv. 10. God said unto Moses, *Gather me the People together, and I will make them bear my Words; that they may learn to fear me all the Days that they shall live upon the Earth, and that they may teach their Children.*

The Reason, which the great God in this Scripture assigns for his commanding Moses to read publickly, and the People to hear his Words so read, shews that God intended more than his Words being once read by Moses, at the giving the Law at Mount Sinai; even to appoint it an Ordinance for ever to be observed by his People

throughout all their Generations, so long as there should be a People to learn, to fear, and serve him, and so long as there should be Children, that need Instruction.

And the Difuse of this Ordinance, is the Way to have People ignorant of God and their Duty; ignorant of the Things he has revealed, and incapable of teaching their Children, what God would have them taught.

In Deut. xii. 28. Moses said unto the People, *Observe and HEAR all these Words, which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy Children after thee for ever; when thou doest that which is good and right in the Sight of the Lord thy God.*

Here we may observe,

1. A Precept to the People, *viz. To hear all the Words which the Lord hath commanded:* Which implies, that it is the Duty of those whose Office it is to instruct the People, to read unto them, all the Words which the Lord hath commanded.

2. That Peoples hearing, and obeying the Words of the Lord, doing that which is good and right in his Sight, is the Way to have the Blessing of God upon themselves, and their Children.

The Book of the Covenant of God with his People, and his Laws, his Statutes and Ordinances were publickly read, and heard in the Days of Moses, who wrote the Book of Deuteronomy about forty Years after his first reading of the Law to the People; and afterwards in the Time of Joshua. But was the Reading them *a Part of God's publick Worship* on the Holy Sabbaths?

To this Question, I return to myself this Answer, *viz.* that if nothing had been said about it in the History contained in the Holy Scriptures, I should conclude that it was so; because

it is as needful a Means of propagating the Knowledge of God, and of his revealed Will, and of bringing People to fear him, and to do that which is good and right in the Sight of the LORD in every Age, Country, and Congregation, as in the Days of Moses and Joshua. But from the Holy Scriptures we know certainly, that it was a Part of the publick Worship every Sabbath Day.

In Acts xiii. 27. The Apostle Paul says, *For they, that dwell at Jerusalem, and their Rulers, because they knew him not, (did not know Christ) nor yet the Voice of the Prophets, which are READ EVERY SABBATH DAY, they have fullfilled them in condemning him.*

In Acts xv. 21. It is said, *For Moses of old Time hath in every City them that preach him, being read in the Synagogues (in every City) EVERY SABBATH DAY.*

Hence it is evident, that the publick Reading the Scriptures then extant, viz. the Writings of Moses and the Prophets, was part of the publick Worship of God, through the Times of the Old Testament: And the Reading them is here called *preaching them.*

As it was an Ordinance of God's commanding, so it was conscientiously observed by the People through the Times of the Old Testament: And the Laws which enjoined it, God has never repealed; and no Angels or Men have Authority to set it aside.

Our blessed Redeemer did himself join in this Part of divine Worship: In Luke iv. 15, 16. It is said, *He taught in their (the Jews) Synagogues, being glorified of all. And (that) he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and as his Custom was, he went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath Day, and stood up for to read;* which shews his Approba-

tion of the Ordinance; and therefore all his Disciples should prize it, and gladly give their Attendance on the Sabbath Days, and hear the Word of God contained in the Law of Moses. and in the Writings of the Prophets and Apostles, and hear with great Attention and Reverence.

In Mat. xxiii. 1, 2. we read thus, *Then spake Jesus unto the Multitude, and (also) to his Disciples, saying, The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses Seat: All therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, (of the Laws of God by Moses) that observe and do.* These Injunctions of Christ shew, that he did not set aside the Ordinance, but required the Multitude to hear the Word of God, and to obey it.

If that very antient Custom of Reading the Holy Scriptures ever Sabbath Day as a Part of the publick Worship, was a meer human Appointment, our blessed Saviour who said, *Every Plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.* (Mat. xv. 13.) doubtless would not have conformed himself to it, and joined in that Part of religious Worship as he did: And it appears most evident from what has been noted, that this Part of Worship was a divine Institution; and the Reasons which God himself gives for commanding it, prove that he intended it to continue so long as he had a Church and People in the World.

But this also appears evident from his own Words in Luke xvi. 19, &c. where we have the Parable of a certain rich Man, that was clothed in Purple and fine Linnen, and fared sumptuously every Day; and of a Beggar named *Lazarus*, who was laid at his Gate full of Sores: These both died; but their Condition immediately after Death was vastly different; for the poor Beggar was carried by Angels up to Heaven into Abraham's

ham's Bosom, but the rich Man was taken away from all his Riches and Grandeur, and voluptuous Way of living, and carried down into Hell, and there was tormented with Flames unquenchable.

And this rich, now, miserable Sinner, seeing Lazarus with Abraham, intreated that he might be sent to his five Brethren, to testify to them the Torments he endured, that so being forewarned, they might be excited to an holy Life, lest they also should come to the same Place of Torment.

Our blessed Redeemer represents Abraham as giving this Answer, *viz. They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them.* ver. 29.

And when the rich Man replied, *Nay Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the Dead, they will repent* : But Abraham said, *If they will not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the Dead.*

We may from these Words which our blessed Saviour represents Abraham as speaking to the rich Man, learn,

1. That the publick Reading of the Writings of Moses and the Prophets, and consequently the Books of the New Testament, was an Ordinance appointed by God the supreme Lawgiver.

2. That this Ordinance was appointed as the Means of bringing Men to repent of their Sins, and to know, and love God, to believe and obey his Word revealed in his Holy Scriptures.

3. That it is a Duty incumbent on the Ministers of Christ, and one great Part of their Work, since the Establishment of the Gospel Dispensation, to read publickly the Holy Scriptures.

4. That it is the Duty of all Sorts of People to attend on the publick Reading of them : And there are Promises to engage them to this Duty.

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In Isa. lv. 3. our merciful God says, *Incline your Ear, and come unto me. hear and your Souls shall live, and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you.*

It is a very great Duty for People to read the Word of God, but that is not the Duty enjoined in this Text, there is no Use of the Eyes in that Exercise; the Expression, *incline your Ear, and Hear,* shews plainly, that the Duty enjoined is a serious Attention to the publick Reading of the Holy Scriptures.

In Luke xi. 28. It is said by our dear Redeemer, *Blessed are they that bear the Word of God, and keep it.*

I may add, that as the Reading the Scriptures of the Old Testament, was a sufficient Means to bring Men to repent; so the Reading the Holy Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament, is a sufficient Means to the same End.

By *sufficient*, I would not be understood as if I thought all other Means needless and useles: For Parents teaching their Children the Things which the Lord has commanded in his Word; and the Ministers of God, whose Office is to instruct the People by explaining, and discoursing, or preaching on particular Parts of the Sacred Scriptures, are great Duties, which the Lord hath commanded, and of great Importance to the People: But how? Only as they help the People more clearly to understand those Parts of Scripture which the Ministers of Christ preach upon, and which are, or ought to be read unto them.

The Apostle Paul in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, (writ about sixty Years after our Saviours Nativity,) speaking of the Jews says, *But their Minds were blinded, for until this Day remaineth the same Vail, untaken away in the Reading of the Old Testament, which Vail is done away in Christ:*

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But even unto this Day, when Moses (that is, the Word of God by Moses) is read, the Vail is upon their Hearts. 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15.

What the Apostle here observes shews, that the Writings of Moses and the Old Testament, were in his Time publickly Read on the Sabbath Days. And hence we may conclude, that the Writings of the New Testament, the Gospels, and the Epistles of the Apostles, and the Revelations by the Apostle John, which containeth further discoveries of the Will of God, and the Way of our Salvation, were likewise publickly Read, as a Part of the Worship we owe to God, the God of our Salvation.

And in 1 Cor. i. 1, 2. St. Paul directs that Epistle not only to the Church of God at Corinth, but to *them that were sanctified in Christ Jesus, (wherever they inhabited) called to be Saints, with all them that in every Place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

In 2 Cor. i. 1. The Apostle directs that Epistle, *unto the Church of God at Corinth, with all the Saints which are in all Achaia.*

In Colos. iv. 16. The Apostle who had directed the Epistle to the Saints, and faithful Brethren, which were in Christ at Colosse, (Chap. i. 1.) says to them, *When this Epistle is read amongst you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewise read the Epistle from Laodicea.*

We may very reasonably conclude from such Passages as these, that God intended that the Writings of the Apostles which make the Books of the *New Testament*, should be read in all the Churches of Christ.

The Reasons for the publick Reading of the New Testament, are more numerous than those for the Old; on the Account that it is a better
1 Testament

Testament, or Covenant, (Heb. ix. 6.) and that it contains a more clear Revelation of the *everlasting Gospel*, (Rev. xiv. 6.) *the Gospel of Peace*, (Ephes. vi. 15.) *the Gospel of our Salvation*, (Ephes. i. 13.) *the Gospel of Christ*, (Rom. i. 16) *the Gospel of the blessed God*, (1 Tim. i. 11.) *that glorious Gospel*. (2 Cor. iv. 4.) And brighter Manifestations of the Love of God in sending his only begotten Son into the World to save Sinners: On the Account that the New Testament, contains *four Histories* of the Life, Doctrines, Miracles, Sufferings, Prophecies, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven of the SON OF GOD: And more distinct Instructions in those Things we are to believe, to practise, and to hope for: And on the Account that the New Testament contains the other Writings of the Apostles, shewing us more plainly the Way of Faith and Holiness, and forewarning us of all the great EVENTS that are to be brought to pass in the World.

The Consideration of these things convinces me, that it is the Will of God, that the Scriptures of the New, as well as those of the Old Testament, should be read in the Congregation of Christians, as Part of the publick Worship, he requires of us, and as a considerable Part of it; and that by a serious and attentive Hearing, we are to express our Reverence of God, and Regard to his Authority and to the gracious Contents of his Word, and to signify our Resolution always to believe and obey it.

In the third Verse of the first Chapter of the Book of the Revelations to St. John, it is said, *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the Words of this Prophecy, and keep those Things which are written therein.*

This Text shews, that notwithstanding those Parts of it, which are difficult to be interpreted,
God

God requires all Christians to read it and to hear it, and those who cannot read, should be more diligent to hear it: Which implies, that it belongs to the Office of some, even of the Ministers of Christ to read it publickly, that the People may have the opportunity of hearing it; and may be informed of those many useful Instructions contained in it, and which are easy to be understood.

I am not for laying aside the preaching Sermons on some one, or a few more Verses of the Holy Scriptures, which has been in the past Ages, as well as in the present, one right and good Way of teaching the Word of God, of publishing the glad Tidings of Salvation by Jesus Christ, and inculcating the great Things God has revealed to us: And I hope 'twill be always in Use to the End of the World, for the Conversion of Sinners, and for the Confirmation, Edification, and Comfort of the Saints.

But then these Sermons on the Lord's Days, should not be so enlarged as to exclude the publick Reading the Holy Scriptures; since that is one of the Parts of publick Worship, which the Lord requires of us, which is as needful now for the Good of immortal Souls as ever, and will be as much wanted in all future Ages.

The People ought to have the Opportunity of hearing the Words of God, in that Order and Connexion in which his Wisdom has disposed them, and I think we should shew our Reverence of his Wisdom by the publick Reading them as they were written.

And as God will be glorified by a due Performance of this Part of his publick Worship, so with his Blessing, it may be very beneficial to the several Sorts of People that may be Hearers.

It may be an happy Means of edifying and comforting the most *serious Christians*: The Passages

of Scripture which they shall hear, may occasion suitable pious Thoughts, and excite holy Desires, Affections and Resolutions, according to the Matter of them.

When a serious Christian hears the Commandments, he can say in his Mind to God : Lord! they are all of them holy, wise, just and good ; O how love I thy Law ! Do thou by thy blessed Spirit make it the Subject of my Meditation Day and Night, in every Opportunity and Occasion for it !

When from the historical Parts of the Scriptures he hears of a wicked Man, and of God's Vengeance upon him, he may think thus ; By Nature I am the same ; but O my good God, it is thy Grace which has made the Difference, and restrained me from those Sins, which were the Ruin of his Soul and Body ! I praise and thank thee, for the Restraints thou didst lay on me, and for all the Workings of thy holy Spirit in me !

When he hears the Account of any of those who feared God, and walked daily with him, and of the Tokens of his Favour to them, he may say within himself : Here, O my Soul, is an Example for thy Imitation ! O my God make me such a faithful Servant to thee, and make me to excel in Faith, Holiness and Humility !

When he hears read the History of the Idolatry, and other Immoralities of God's own People, when he hears of their Departures from God, and the long Abounding of Iniquities among them, and of the destroying Judgments which his righteous Providence brought upon them ; he may think, that 'tis a dreadful Thing for a Nation to forsake their God, and to go on in a Course of Rebellion against him ; and that no such Nation can escape his Vengeance without Reformation ; and hereby he may be excited the more to fear
God,

God, and to avoid all those Things which will provoke him.

When he hears read the Account of God's People repenting, and humbling themselves, and of their reforming their Lives, and returning to God with earnest Supplications for Pardon, for Mercy and Deliverance; and hears how mercifully God forgave them, and delivered them from their Enemies, and made the Storms of his Vengeance to cease; and Peace, Tranquility and Prosperity to return; he may think how gracious is the great God! How willing to be reconciled to his disobedient People upon their Repentance: O my God, help me to love thee more and more for thy immense Goodness! *Oh that all Men would praise the Lord for his Goodness, for his wonderful Works to the Children of Men!* (Psal. cvii. 15. 24.)

And when the Psalms of David are read, which are full of pious Petitions, when he hears those which are suitable to his Case, he may say in his Heart, Lord grant this Petition to me!

Psal. cxix. 12. it is said, *Blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy Statutes; deal bountifully with thy Servant, that I may live and keep thy Word; open thou mine Eyes, that I may behold wonderful Things out of thy Law.* ver. 17, 18.

A Multitude of Instances might be mentioned to shew how the Reading the Holy Scriptures, as Part of the publick Worship of God, may be profitable to the most pious Hearers, although they daily read them at Home.

But this Ordinance in every Congregation, is more especially needful for those who never read, and seldom hear the Holy Scriptures; it is necessary for those who remain in a State of Ignorance, of Unbelief, and Disobedience.

And if such Persons shall attend the publick Worship in Assemblies of Christians, in which the Holy Scriptures are read every Sabbath Day, as well as preached, they will be present when, and where both those divine Ordinances are administered, which our good God, the God of Salvation, has appointed for the Instruction, and Conversion of Sinners, as well as for the Edification of the Saints: They will be where they will hear that Word of God, *which is perfect converting the Soul*; they are in the Way of being made wise unto Salvation. And who can tell but the Holy Spirit may this Sabbath, or another, set home on their Consciences some Word of God to their Conviction, and to the bringing them to Repentance towards God, and to Faith in our Lord Jesus.

It is good to be where God would have us to be, and using the Means to obtain saving Knowledge.

But they who will neither read, nor hear the Word of the LORD, are in the direct Way to die in their Sins, and sink down in the Gulph of endless Miseries.

These are ignorant, and very ignorant of those Things God would have them to know; ignorant both of his Laws, and of his Gospel.

They are ignorant of his Laws; no wonder then that they live in Disobedience to many of them.

It appears therefore to me a Matter of great Importance, that the holy Laws of God, not only the Ten Commandments, which are but a *Summary* of them; but his other moral Precepts, some recorded in the Old, and some in the New Testament, should be made publick; and the Reading the Holy Scriptures every Lord's Day, in every Congregation of Christians, is the proper Way of doing it.

This

This Reading would be a setting before People, *A Lamp unto their Feet, and a Light unto their Path.* (Psal. cxix. 105.) It would be a shewing them the Way in which they should go, a shewing them what they should do, and what they should not do; and may be a Means of preventing much Sin, and of keeping some People from those sinful Ways in which they allow themselves; and a Means of their becoming sincere Christians.

There are some Laws which either are not commonly known, or are not regarded:

It is commanded, *Children obey your Parents; Honour thy Father and thy Mother:* And these Laws are apprehended to bind Children while they are young: But there is another Law, which binds them when they become Men, and Women, I mean that in Levit. xix. 3. *Ye shall fear every Man his Mother, and his Father.* And that in Levit. x. 8 — 11. which is as binding on all the Ministers of Christ in all Ages, as it was on Aaron, and his Sons and their Descendants; but these have been taken Notice of already.

In Deut. xxv. 13, 14, 16. God, the righteous and just God, says, *Thou shalt not have in thy Bag divers Weights, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect, and a just Weight, a perfect, and a just Measure, shalt thou have: For all that do such Things, (viz. keeping divers Weights, and divers Measures) and all that do unrighteously, are Abomination unto the Lord thy God.*

These are moral Precepts, and should be known to all Men.

The Doctrines of the Gospel which we are to believe, and very many of the Duties incumbent on Christians, are frequently preached by the faithful Ministers of Christ of every Denomination, and blessed be God that they are so; but this does not render the Reading the Holy Scriptures needless

to the most knowing Christians: They find Instruction and Comfort in their daily Conferences with them in their Closet, and can also profit by them when they hear them read in Publick.

But as there are so many in most Congregations, who have neither read, or heard the Holy Scriptures; methinks, all who truly love God, and believe in Christ, and wish all their fellow Creatures to be not only almost, but altogether such as they are, in Covenant with God, and sincere Disciples of the blessed Jesus: Methinks, I say, they should rejoice, that God has made the Reading his Word a Part of the publick Worship of Him.

It is a proper Means of diffusing in the Minds of the Hearers, the Knowledge of those Things which concern their Salvation, and everlasting Felicity, and also their Happiness, their Comfort and Joy, while in this World.

I apprehend, that if three or four Chapters of the Holy Scriptures (more or less, as Circumstances shall direct) were publickly Read on our Lord's Days in the Time of divine Worship, and the Minister at the End of each Chapter recited the Contents of it, a little fuller than the large Contents which in some Bibles are prefixed to the Chapters; with brief general Observations when needful, it would contribute much to the Hearers Understanding of the blessed Revelation contained in them.

It is a pious Custom of some Masters on the Sabbath Day, to read some Part of a good Book to their Families; and their doing so, shews an Esteem for the Author of the Book, as well as for the Contents of it:

And so the serious Reading God's Book is paying a Respect to the wise, the great, and the gracious Author of it.

And

And when this is done seriously in Publick, it is a publick Act of Reverence to God, and of Love to his Word ; it is a publick Act of religious Worship, and our most reasonable Service.

And therefore I cannot but wish that the Use of this Ordinance, this ancient, this most beneficial Ordinance, divinely instituted, may obtain and be improved in every Congregation of Christians, for the Glory of God, and for the Sake of the many in every worshipping Assembly, who do greatly want it.

I have already observed, that in Rev. i. 3. it is said, *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the Words of this Prophecy, and keep those Things which are written therein.*

I would now a little more distinctly mention the Particulars expressed, or evidently implied in this Text, which ought to influence the Practice of all Christians, *viz.*

1. That God requires every Person (who can read) to read his Book of the Revelations, and to keep those Things which are written therein: Which signifies that they believe the Doctrines, the Promises, and Threatnings, and obey the Commandments contained in it.

This is a just Inference from God's declaring that every such Person is *blessed*: He is blessed of God, and blessed by him.

2. It is likewise evident, that God requires the publick Reading his Book of the Revelations, without which People cannot hear it.

3. That it is the Duty of Christians to attend the publick Reading of this Book.

4. It may be concluded that it is the Duty of the Ministers of Christ to perform this Office.

5. We may infer that God requires Men to read his other Books of the Holy Scripture, and to hear them publickly read, and to keep those Things which are contained in them: And likewise, that it is incumbent on the Ministers of Christ publickly to read them; especially those Parts of the Holy Scriptures, which contain the Doctrines, the Promises and Threatnings, the Statutes, the Ordinances, and the Laws of God; the Predictions recorded in his Word, and the Histories of the Righteous, and the Wicked, and of God's Dealings with them.

And the Blessedness spoken of should be a Motive prevailing both with Ministers and People, conscientiously to perform the Duty now mentioned.

We should always remember that *there is one LAWGIVER, who is able to save, and to destroy.* (James iv. 12.) We should always endeavour to know the revealed Will of our gracious God, and faithfully act according to it.

Should not a People seek unto their God? it is said, Isa. viii. 19. and in ver. 20. To the Law, and to the Testimony; if they speak not (i. e. do not teach) according to this Word, it is because there is no Light, or Truth, in them.

It appears to me most evident, that the right and true ANSWER to the Question considered, is this, *viz.*

Answer: That the publick Reading the Holy Scriptures in the Assemblies of Christians every (Sabbath, or) Lord's Day, is an Ordinance of divine Appointment, and Part of that Worship which God requires from his People.

It is hence manifest, that the Disuse of this Ordinance, is a taking away from the Things, which the Lord hath commanded; and is a Transgression

gression of those Laws which were mentioned in the Introduction of this Letter.

HAPPY will it be, if all the Societies of Christians of every Denomination shall examine by the sacred Scriptures, their religious Customs in the Worship of God; of the great God, jealous of his own Authority and Glory; and if they shall lay aside every Usage, which is an Addition to the Things which the Lord hath commanded, and shall set up the Use of every Ordinance of God, which has hitherto been neglected.

The CONSEQUENCE, the glorious Consequence, will be an endearing *Coalition* of the different Sects of Christians, and a blessed Reformation among the professed Disciples of the holy Jesus. Then will Idolatry and Superstition cease among Christians, then the Worship of God will be more pure, and intire, more agreeable to his revealed Will, and free from Additions to, and Diminutions from his Ordinances, which he has strictly forbidden, and which he greatly abhors; and therefore it will be more pleasing to him, and more comfortable and profitable to those who sincerely worship him.

O gracious God, by the Influence of thy holy Spirit on the Minds of Christians of every Denomination, do thou bring such a Reformation to pass! Do thou convince all Men of the Excellency and Value of thy WORD! Oh, that they could truly say unto thee, *The Law of thy Mouth is better to me than Thousands of Gold and Silver!* (Psal. cxix. 72.) LORD excite them both to read and hear it! Open their Understanding, that they may understand it, and help them by thy Grace duly to improve it! Amen.

2 Tim. iii. 15. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES; which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, through Faith, which is in Christ Jesus.

A pious Poet well expressed himself to the gracious Author of our Bible, in the following Lines, *viz.*

Let all the *Heathen* Writers join
To form one perfect Book ;
Great God, if once compar'd with thine,
How mean their Writings look !

Not the most perfect Rules they gave,
Could shew one Sin forgiven ;
Nor lead one Step beyond the Grave ;
But thine conduct to Heaven.

WATTS'S Psalms, p. 318.

Pfal. cvii. 8. *Oh that Men would praise the Lord for his Goodness, and for his wonderful Works to the Children of Men ! Amen.*

C O N C L U S I O N .

THIS, and the preceding Letters, are address'd unto all Men, because all Men are most nearly concerned in the Contents of them ; and because all who shall believe *the Words of the LORD* cited in them will have Peace, Comfort, and Honour in this World ; they will have that Honour which cometh from God only, the Honour of being his true Servants, his beloved Children, and his Heirs ; and they will have inexpressible Felicities, and Glories in that endless World to which we are going. And at the Day of Judgment they will receive the Reward of the Inheritance, they will be put into the Possession of a Kingdom and a Crown, which Christ has purchased, and in his Gospel promised, to all his sincere Disciples, who shall reign in Life by him. Rom. v. 17.

That

The Holy Scriptures. 163

That this may be the Case of those, who shall
read these Papers, is the Prayer of,

their faithful Servant,

London, March 17,
1761.
Et in Anno Vitæ, 83.

THEOPHILUS LOBB.

F I N I S.



